DALITS AND CHRISTIAN MISSION IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY

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DALITS AND CHRISTIAN MISSION IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY

THE DALIT MOVEMENT AND PROTESTANT CHRISTIANS IN THE TAMIL SPEAKING DISTRICTS OF MADRAS PRESIDENCY 1919-1939 WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LONDON MISSION SOCIETY AREA IN SALEM, ATTUR, COIMBATORE AND ERODE

by

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Published by:
Asian Trading Corporation
150, Brigade Road
Bangalore - 560 025

1997

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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Dedicated to

The Dalits of India

Dedicated to

The Dahis of India

PREFACE

Dr. Franklyn J. Balasundaram did the basic research and writing for the present book during his M.Th. studies some thirteen years ago. Later he went on to earn a D.Th. and published a revised form of his dissertation entitled *EATWOT in Asia: Towards a Relevant Theology* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1993). In that work he had not only shifted from the limited focus of central Tamilnadu to the Asian stage, but he had begun to move from history to theology. His decision to publish a revised version of his M.Th. thesis after all these years represents a movement back towards history. In doing so he has joined a number of historians who have begun to contribute towards the historical understanding of the experience of Dalit Christians.

The primary importance of *Dalits and Christian Mission in the Tamil Country* is not simply in its celebration of Dr. Balasundaram's return to historical studies at the grass-roots level, but of his growing conviction that a well documented and analysed understanding of the historical experience of Dalit Christians provides a significant basis for the construction of a Dalit theology. In his *The Dalit Christians: A History* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1992), John C.B. Webster developed a conceptual framework for the understanding of Dalit Christian history. He established that the history of Dalit Christians can only be understood within the context of the larger Dalit movement. He supported his schema by referring to particular developments among Dalits in south, west and north India. Balasundaram's work is more modest but as important in its way because it penetrates deeply into the experience of several Dalit groups in an area with a common cultural context - the Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode fields of the London Missionary Society. Historical generalization can only be based on an accumulation of such in- depth studies of particular groups.

Balasundaram wrote his thesis long before Webster published his book. But Webster's influence is clear from the structure and

the questions that he asks. That is not surprising, for while I supervised the later stages of the thesis, it was Webster who started him out. The book begins by establishing that the Dalit efforts to improve their situation in Tamil country during the third and fourth decades of the present century was indeed a movement. After reviewing the material and religious conditions under which the various Dalit groups lived, it surveys the contributions various organizations, mainly government and Christian missions, made to their upliftment. He concludes that the missions were successful among the Dalits not because they improved the material conditions of their lives (they did not), but because they gave the Dalits a sense of self-worth and human dignity. He demonstrates how this was done through education, medical work, women's work and rural development schemes. Balasundaram's conclusions are especially valuable because, while he uses many substantial secondary sources, most of his conclusions are based on a wide variety of primary sources - government reports, newspapers, personal interviews, mission reports and writings of various kinds.

All historians of Christianity who believe that the church cannot be understood except through the people who constitute its basic membership, all members of the intelligentsia who condescendingly conclude that Dalits only became Christian to secure the improvement of their material conditions and that if they did not get that Christianity failed, all theologians who believe that their insights must be based on the real historical experiences of a people, those interested in various aspects of Dalit studies ought to read this book. I am sure they will join me in expressing appreciation to Franklyn Balasundaram, formerly my student, now my colleague and friend, for finally publishing this book.

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November 1995

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It was in the late 70s the Dalit Panther Movement gained momentum in Maharashtra and eversince more and more number of people had started to show keen interest in the Dalit reality. Roughly about this time, the United Theological College also joined the bandwagon. Among those who gave a pioneering lead in the U.T.College were the late Rev.A.P.Nirmal and the Rev.Dr.John.C.B.Webster. While the former started to go back to his roots, after his stay and study of the Dalit Panther Movement at Pune and came up with the famous Deutronomic Faith Affirmation: "A wandering Aramaen was my Father", the latter spent considerable time and energy in the Archives of UTC and started to offer a course entitled: "Depressed Classes Movement". It is a privilege to have been a student of both of them. I am grateful to late Rev.Nirmal and, Dr.Webster for the insights they shared with me.

This study DALITS AND CHRISTIAN MISSION IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY was originally attempted for the Senate of Serampore College in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Theology in the field of the History of Christianity. Initially, this study began under the supervision of Dr.Webster but in a few months, he returned to the United States and thus, this work was more or less fully supervised by Dr.F.S. Downs. It is indeed a privilege to have had Dr.Downs as my guide. He evinced keen interest in my work and helped me by offering useful suggestions. I, therefore, express my gratitude to Dr.Webster, who introduced me to the field of study and Dr.Downs, who sustained my interest. I record a special word of thanks to Dr.Downs for writing the Preface.

This study deals with the interaction between the London Missionary Society Christians (LMS Christians, i.e, Missionaries and others) and the LMS related Christians (Christian Dalits) in the LMS Tamil Field which included Salem, Attur, Coimbatore

and Erode areas in the present-day Tamilnadu. A careful reading will reveal that the LMS Christians (Missionaries) did not simply act upon the LMS related Christians (Dalit Converts), but together they contributed to the Dalit Movement in the Tamil Country. Suggestions to improve this work are welcome.

"Dalit" is an expression that has come into use widely since the 70s as Dalits themselves preferred to be known that way. Before this term gained currency, they were known as "Depressed Classes". Hence, "Dalits" and "Depressed Classes" are used interchangeably in this work. Inclusive language has been attempted wherever possible and whenever necessary.

The Senate of Serampore College granted permission to publish this work and therefore, I thank Rev.D.S.Satyaranjan, Registrar, Senate of Serampore College, and others. I received excellent co-operation in collecting materials at the following places: State Archives, Madras, Connemara Library, Madras University Library and Madras Christian College Library. I am grateful to all those who helped me at the above mentioned places. Last but not least, the Library staff of the United Theological College helped me very much with the available materials. Hence, I thank them all sincerely. The front cover page was done by my friend Mr.David Yex, M.M.Road, Bangalore. I thank him sincerely for his contribution and help.

This work is not monumental in any sense. But it is a significant work as it tries to grapple with the Dalit quest for humanity and the Christian contribution towards the same.

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September 1996

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role played by London Mission Society (hereafter LMS Christians) related Christians among the Dalits in the Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode areas, and hence their contribution to the Dalit Movement.

A study of this type which concerns Christians' contribution to the Dalits has not been attempted so far. Webster's "Christians and the Depressed Classes Movement in the 1930's. The Crucial Decade" deals with the Dalit Movement at the all India level and Christians role in it outlined generally. Sundaraj Manickam's *The Social setting of Christian conversion in South India* is a study about the Mass Movement part in Trichinopoly. Gladstone's "The social impact of the Protestant Missionary work in South Travancore in the 19th Century" concerns Travancore area. Thus so far there has been no attempt to study the Christian involvement with the Dalits in the Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode areas. This study is an attempt to fill that gap.

What was the nature of the London Mission Society related Christians involvement with the Dalits? Why did they become involved? Who was involved and where? What was the consequence to the Dalits of their involvement? These are some of the questions for which answers are sought in this study. There are other questions which have direct bearing upon the topic. In what sense can one call the efforts of the Dalits to improve their condition a movement? Who were the Dalit Communities involved? What other agencies were interested in the Dalits? These questions are also dealt with in this study.

Period of Study

This study covers a period of 20 years, from 1919 to 1939. It has been chosen because during this period the Dalits became a public issue, and their movement gained momentum in the Madras Presidency, where it gained a significant measure of political

recognition from the Government. Not only the Christian Church and the Government, but also other voluntary and political agencies interacted with the Dalits at this time. This study also demonstrates that during these years the LMS Christians played a significant role in undergirding the movement.

The Geographical area

Geographically this study is restricted to the Tamil speaking districts of the present day Tamil Nadu. The present day Kanyakumari district is not included within the scope of this study because it was then a part of Travancore, not the Madras Presidency. This is the area generally covered in so far as it concerns the Dalits or the Depressed Classes Movement. The London Mission Society areas this study covers are the present day Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode areas/districts. Within the Madras presidency the London Mission Society also worked in Madras and Tirupattur. But since Madras was geographically separated from the rest, it is left out of our study. Tirupattur is left out because in 1922 that area was delegated to the National Missionary Society and thus it ceased to be a London Mission Society area.[1] London Mission Society Christians called the area covered by that Society in the Tamil speaking districts of the Madras Presidency as the Tamil field. This study uses this expression "Tamil Field" to describe the Society's work in Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode areas only.

The London Mission Society's records do not specify Attur as an area. It was considered as an extension of the Salem Mission work. Since, the special work among Kuravars was done there, this study treats Attur as a distinct area. Thus, in this study, London Mission Society work in the Tamil speaking districts of Madras Presidency refers to their work at Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and

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1. *London Missionary Society The One Hundred and Fortyfirst Annual Report 1935-1936,* LMS, Westminster 1936, p.41 (hereafter *Mission Report*).

   See also: Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945,* Great Britain, Oxford University Press, 1954, p. 77 (hereafter *A History*).

Erode areas only. In this study "London Mission Society Christians" is preferred to "London Mission Society Christianity", because, the study concerns itself with people rather than with systems of religious belief and practice. It also uses the expression "Christian Community" instead of "Christian Church" for the sake of flexibility.

Structure of the Study

This study begins with an analysis of Dalits' efforts to improve their condition in the Madras Presidency for the purpose of determining whether or not such efforts can be described as a Movement. In this connection reference is made to sociological studies concerning the nature of Social Movements. The conclusion is reached that the efforts of the Dalits during the period of our study can indeed be called a movement. Next the different stages in the Depressed Classes or Dalit Movement are identified and, in this context the role of Dalit leaders is briefly described.

In the third chapter, the Dalit or depressed class communities and their occupational, economic, religious, social, literary and political status are studied in detail.

The Fourth Chapter deals with voluntary agencies which involved themselves with the Dalits in India in general, and in the Madras presidency in particular. In connection with each of these voluntary agencies the following Questions are asked:

> Why did they involve themselves with the Dalits? What was the nature of their involvement? and, what was the consequence of such involvement?

A major portion of this chapter deals with the actions of the Government and the Christian Missions on behalf of the Dalits. Under Christian Missions, an attempt is made to understand the motive of their involvement with the Dalits which has direct bearing upon the fifth chapter.

The fifth chapter deals with the London Mission Society Christians work among Dalits in the Tamil Field. An attempt is made to determine who the converts were and which communities they came from. An assessment is made as to which of the LMS Christians contributed to the uplift of the depressed classes or Dalit coverts and how they did so. An over all evaluation forms the last section of the study.

Sources

The primary sources for this study include:

a) Government records such as Madras Presidency Government orders (G.O), Census Reports and statutory Commission proceedings. These help determine the attitude of the Government to the Depressed Classes or the Dalits and its activities on their behalf.

b) The Depressed Classes Conference Reports. These help determine the attitude of the Depressed Classes themselves.

c) Report of the Indian National Congress.

d) The writings of Gandhi in *Christian Missions, Young India* and *Harijan.*

e) The writings of E.V. Ramaswamy in *Maranasasanam, Suya Mariyathai Iyakkathai Thorttuvithathen* and "Viduthalai".

f) Newspaper reports in *The Guardian, The National Christian Council Review, The Indian Social Reformer, Indian Economic and Social History Review, The International Review of Missions, The East and West, The Harvest Field, The Swadesa Mitran, The Andhra Patrika, The Matru Seva, The Hindu* and *Sudarsini.*

g) *The London Mission Society Annual Reports,* the LMS Deputation Reports, the LMS India Foreign Secretaries' Reports. The Annual Reports, though written from the Mission point of view, are the only records that speak about many of the actual events. Hence, they are widely used.

Letters from the LMS Board to Rev. T.Narasimhan, and the Minutes of the LMS Medical Sub-Committee are also found to be useful. Walter's *India Through My Eyes,* visitors Books of Attur Kurava Boys and Girls Boarding schools, Popley's *The village goes to school,* and Whitney's *One Hundred years of Salem Mission History* were found to be useful. The books of G.E.Phillips entitled *Doings and Dreams, The Outcastes' Hope, Back to India, The Gospel in the world, Our Sixth Form in South India, The Ancient Church and Modern India, The Missionary's Job* are treated as primary sources, because Phillips served as LMS Missionary at Tirupattur[2] which was a part of Salem Mission work. He was also LMS India Foreign Secretary and in that capacity Phillips had visited all the areas in the Tamil Field. In his writings, Phillips not only expresses his views about the Dalits, but also that of the London Mission Society, and hence all his works are treated as primary sources.

h) Personal interviews were conducted with:

1) Mrs. Jessie Jacob who hails from Erode area. She studied in LMS schools at Salem and Madras in Bentinck School and worked in one of the community Schools at Erode.

2) Mrs. Jacob's brother, A.T. Balraj, Principal, Bishop Cotton's Boys School, Bangalore. He was associated with Missionaries such as H.A. Popley, and his brothers were educated at Salem Boys Residential School. One of his brothers Rev. Kanakaraj worked as pastor in the Coimbatore Diocese and his other brother worked as the Principal of Erode Community School.

3) Mrs. Sambiah, daughter of Rev. T. Narasimhan, for Attur Section.

Apart from these primary sources, numerous secondary sources are also used in this study. These are listed in the bibliography.

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2. *Mission Report,* 1908, p.92-93 & 289.

CHAPTER - I

DEPRESSED CLASSES OR DALIT MOVEMENT

A Movement can be defined as an attempt to seek change for the better. It need not be explicit or conspicuous. It can develop primarily in an informal and inconspicuous way. A movement can be rather formless in organization and inarticulate in expression. The very desire to have a new order or life, even undirected striving, can be defined as a Movement. In this sense, the efforts of the Dalits to improve their condition can be defined as a Movement.

1. Was there a Depressed Classes or Dalit Movement?

What is a Movement? How do we define it? What constitutes a social Movement? To provide answer to these questions, one needs to go to the sociologists. Heberle and Gusfield define Social Movements thus:

> The term Social Movements
> or its equivalent in other
> Western languages is being
> used to denote a wide variety
> of collective attempts to
> bring about a change in certain
> social institutions or to
> create an entirely new order.[1]

In a similar way Blumer also defines Social Movements as "Collective enterprises to establish a new order of life".[2] These are the general definitions of a Social Movement. But then Heberle

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1. Rudolph Heberle & Joseph R. Gusfield, "Social Movements" *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Ed) David L. Sills, Vol. 13, New York: The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1972, p.438 (hereafter "Social Movements").
2. Herbert Blumer, "Social Movements," *Studies in Social Movements,* (Ed) Barry Mclaughlin, USA: The Free Press, 1969, p.8. (Hereafter *Studies in Social Movements*)

and Gusfield point out "... it is advisable.... to distinguish between movements which, because of their limited goals, never attract more than small groups of people and those which .. become true mass Movements of historical significance."[3] In other words, they are of the opinion that distinction should be made between "directed" and "indirected" Movements. According to them a direct Movement "is characterized by organized and structured groups with specific programmes, a formal leadership structure, definitive ideology, and stated objectives".[4] With this kind of a definition of a "directed movement" only Webster, it appears, questions "Whether indeed it is appropriate to speak of the Depressed Classes Movement.[5] It becomes clear now that Webster,in his attempt to judge whether depressed classes strivings was a movement, applies the definition of "directed" or "specific" Social Movement. This, his whole procedure needs to be questioned, because the definition of a direct social movement is applied to the strivings of the depressed classes, which will not fall under that category. Webster's judgment may be correct, but the definition applied, and the procedure adopted does not do justice to the Depressed Classes Movement. The strivings of the depressed classes or Dalits certainly would come under the category of "indirected"[6] or "general social movements".[7]

A General Social Movement takes the form of groping or unco- ordinated efforts. People involved in such a Movement:

> Have only a general direction, toward which they move in a slow, halting, yet persistent fashion. As movements they

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3. Heberle and Gusfield "Social Movements" *op.cit* p.439. In Blumer, the distinction is made between General and Specific Social Movements.
4. *Ibid.* p. 445.
5. John C.B. Webster, "Christians and the Depressed Classes Movement in the 1930's: The crucial Decade", (unpublished) a paper presented at Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi, 1980, p.1 (Hereafter Webster, "*The Crucial Decade*"). Webster of course, accepts that there was a Depressed Classes movement, but with qualifications.
6. Heberle & Gusfield, "Social Movements" *op.cit.* p. 445.
7. Blumer, *Studies in Social Movements, op.cit.*, p.9.

> are unorganized, with neither established leadership and little guidance and control.[8]

In such a general or indirected Social Movement, at one time the impetus to the movement may come from people in one place, at another time in another place. On the whole, the movement is likely to be carried on by many unknown and obscure people who struggle in different areas without their striving and achievements becoming generally known.[9] The leaders of a general Social Movement play an important part - not in the sense of exercising directive control over the movement, but in the sense of being pace-makers. Such leaders, according to Blumer, are likely to be "voices in the wilderness", pioneers without any solid following, and frequently not very clear about their own goal.[10] Therefore, a general Social Movement develops primarily in an informal, inconspicuous and largely sub- terrannean fashion. It is rather formless in organization and inarticulate in expression.[11] After saying all this, Blumer points out that:

> In the beginning a Social Movement is loosely organized and characterized by impulsive behaviour. It has no clear objective; its behaviour and thinking are largely under the dominance of restlessness and collective excitement.[12]

Using these definitions of a General Social Movement, the answer to the question as to whether there was a depressed classes or Dalit movement would be, yes. If one limits one's understanding of Social Movements to the "specific" or "directed" type, then the answer would be no. In this study we proceed on the assumption that the Depressed classes or the Dalit Movement was a social movement in the general sense. The Depressed Classes, it is true, did not have unity either of leadership, or of organization or of

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8. Blumer, *Studies in Social Movements, op.cit.*, p.9.
9. *Ibid.*, p.10.
10. *Ibid.*, p.10.
11. Blumer, *Studies in Social Movements, op.cit.*, p.10.
12. *Ibid.*, p.11.

ideology at the national level.[13] But they were striving.. to change their status, "to establish a new order". Striving for change was there; recognition by contemporaries that this was a nation-wide phenomenon was also there; and achievement of some success, although not by unified action, was also present. A movement need not be a self-conspicuous one. "Movements begin in the minds of men, with ideas"[14] "A Movement implies change", a change for the better, "Whatever may be its nature",[15]. The efforts of the representatives of the Dalits during our period fits the description of a general Social Movement. They did not have a clear ideology or an explicit objective and they did not have unity of leadership, or of organization. But they were striving, striving for change and to better their conditions. In our opinion, striving alone determines a movement and therefore, we conclude that there was a Depressed Classes or Dalit Movement.

How did the Depressed Classes or Dalit Movement begin? How did it develop? Is it possible to pinpoint stages of development in the movement? What was the role of the leaders of the Depressed Classes Movement? We concern ourselves with these questions in this section.

Following Webster,[16] one can identify three stages in the Depressed Classes on Dalit Movement. The first stage in the Dalit Movement was Mass Conversion, especially to Christianity. This was the most significant step the Depressed Classes or the Dalits took in the 19th century to improve their lot. This stage may be

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13. Webster, "The Crucial Decade," *op.cit.*, p.21.
14. S.C.Malik, "Movements within the framework of change", *Indian Movements: Some aspects of Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977, P.27 (hereafter some Aspects)
15. M.S.A. Rao, *Some Aspects, loc cit.*, p.56 See also: M.S.A Rao, *Social Movements*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1978, p.6.
16. John C.B. Webster, "From Indian Church to Indian Theology: An attempt at Theological Construction," (unpublished), a paper presented at UTC Staff Seminar, 1981, p.4- 6. (hereafter, Webster, "Theological Construction") See also: Webster, "The Crucial Decade", *op. cit.* p.1.

dated from the 1860's or 1870's through the 1930's.[17] The Depressed Classes themselves took the initiative in conversion. Usually a depressed class community or a portion of it in a particular village decided to convert and then encouraged their friends and relatives in neighbouring villages to convert as well. This they did because they thought conversion would be good for their people. The primary motive in this attempt seems to have been social and psychological: a chance to move up by moving out of the caste system, a chance to acquire helpful friends outside the village, and a new sense of one's own worth, dignity and self-respect which came with conversion. [18] What came of this attempt? The converts continued in the same village, under the same landlords doing many, but not all, of the things they did before conversion.[19]

A few children had the privilege of receiving education and often left the village, as a mission employee, afterwards.[20] Pickett opines that conversion to Christianity often raised the converts in the esteem of the landlords, but did not remove the problem of poverty.[21] Thus, while conversion to Christianity did not provide a total solution to the problems of the Dalits, even for that small proportion who converted, it seemed to be a step in the direction in which they sought to move.[22]

The Second stage, according to Webster, Which began around 1900 and went upto 1955, was characterized by caste Hindu efforts

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17. Webster, "Theological Construction", *loc. cit.*, p.4.
18. G.A. Oddile, "Christian Conversion in the Telugu country, 1860-1900: A Case Study of one protestant Movement in the Godavery-Krishna Delta, "*Indian Economic and Social History Review,* XII (Jan-March, 1975) p. 61-79 (hereafter "Christian Conversion"). cf., Sundaraj Manickam, *The Social setting of Christian Conversion in South India,* Weisbaden: Franz Steiner Verleg, 1977, P.80-111.
19. Webster, "Theological Construction", *op. cit.*, P.4.
20. *Ibid*
21. J.W. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India,* New York: The Abingdon Press, 1933, P.198-212.
22. Webster, *loc. cit.* p.4

to improve the conditions of the Dalits.[23] This was, at first, done as voluntary social service through such organizations as the Depressed Classes Mission (1906), Harijan Sevak Sangh (1932) and so on. Later it acquired a political dimension when Hindu reformers used the agency of Government, particularly after 1937, to pass laws and to finance and or administer programmes for the welfare of the Dalits.[24] These attempts by the caste Hindu reformers seemed to have had three motives: humanitarian-nationalist; to prevent conversion; political.

The third stage of the Dalit Movement, which can be dated from the 1920's to the present, is characterized by self-assertion and self-reliance on the part of the Depressed Classes themselves.[25] This has taken a number of organizational forms such as All India Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha, The All India Depressed Classes Conference, etc. The three stages of the Depressed Classes or the Dalit Movement described above is as applicable to Madras Presidency as to any other part of India.

In Madras Presidency, the self-assertion of the Depressed Classes or Dalits manifested itself in the form of Adi-Dravida Maha Sabha, Madras Arundhathi Maha Jana Sabha, the Registered All India Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha, Madras Adi-Dravida Central Sabha, Adi-Dravida Jana Sabha and the Depressed Classes Society of South India.[26] These groups have had different constituencies among the Schedule Castes as well as different ideologies and

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23. Cf: IV Chapter in this book.
24. Webster, "Theological Construction", *op. cit,* p.5.
25. G.T. Boag, *Census of India 1921,* vol. XIII, Madras part I Report, Madras: Government Press, 1922 P.158, cf. Webster, "Theological Construction," *op. cit.*, P.6.
26. *Indian Statutory Commission of 1927,* P.2, only the first page of the Commission proceedings is appended. (hereafter *statutory Commission*) See also: S, Saraswathi *Minorities in Madras State,* Delhi: Impex India, 1974, P.146; A.J. Appaswamy, "New Spiritual and Social forces in India," *National Christian Council Review,* 1932, P.572 (hereafter "New Spiritual") and Webster, "Theological Construction", *op. cit.* P.6

strategies of internal transformation and social change.[27] They also seem to have been limited in resources, internal cohesion and leadership. M.C. Raja, a recognized leader of the Adi- Dravida Community in Madras Presidency, pointed out even in 1935, that disunity among the Depressed Classes or the Dalits was the reason for their inability to achieve social and religious equality thus:

> ... Are we united? It must be acknowledged that the lack of unity among those who speak in the name of the community has had adverse effects, on the rise of the community and has seriously jeopardised the work on its behalf; and without unity amongst ourselves the interest of the people are bound to suffer. I appeal to my people to consolidate the community and stand united and work with patience and determination. If this is done our success is assured:[28]

2. Dalit Movement leaders in Madras Presidency:

a) Leaders in Legislature:

While the Depressed Classes or the Dalit Movement in Madras Presidency lacked resources, internal cohesion and leadership, yet some of the leaders who were nominated and or elected to the Madras Legislative Council during the 1920's '30's and '40's played a vital role in the legislative body. For instance, M.C. Raja, a nominated Dalit Member in the Madras Legislative Council and later in the Central Assembly (He was President of the All India Depressed Classes Conference)[29], pioneered the cause of Depressed Classes or Dalits in the Legislatures. He had raised innumerable questions which concerned the Dalits in the Madras Legislative Council. In 1919 itself, M.C. Raja recommended in the Legislative Council that Panchamas, that is Depressed Classes, should be

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27. Webster, "Theological Construction," *op. cit.*, P.6
28. *Indian Social Reformer,* (UTC Vol.46) Nov. 16, 1935, P.168-169 (hereafter ISR)
29. "Depressed Classes, "Editorial, *NCCR* (UTC vol. 52), 1932, p. 115. In 1927, M.C. Raja became the first depressed class person nominated to the central Legislative Assembly. Cf., Webster, "The Crucial Decade", *op. cit* p.4

admitted in all schools.[30] In 1922, he proposed that scholarship amount given to the Depressed Classes should be increased. [31] He ran a hostel for the Depressed Classes children at Madras.[32] In the Legislature, Raja also recommended that candidates should be selected for appointment as constables and sub-Inspectors from among the Dalits. In a letter to C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the then Home Member, M.C. Raja wrote:

> ... I am afraid, a press enquiry will not help us. I wish you issue orders to... candidates from Depressed Classes, if they satisfy the required minimum qualification for the post...[33]

In 1923, he demanded that 20 seats should be set apart to his community in the Madras Legislative Council and that they should be nominated by the Government, not by the Ministers.[34] He also introduced a bill for the abolition of untouchability in 1933.[35]

Another leader who battled for the Dalits in the Legislature was R. Veerian. Veerian, a native of coimbatore and a nominated member in the Madras Legislative Council, raised a number of questions concerning the interest of the Depressed Classed or the Dalits.[36] For instance, in 1925, he recommended that Depressed Classes should be admitted in public Management schools.[37] In 1926, he raised the following question in the Assembly:

> ...May I know, Sir, whether Government have issued any Government order to the effect that the Adi Dravida boys

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30. G.O. Nos: 1545, Home (Edn), 1919./12.12.1919. 1515, Home (Edn), 1919/11.12.1919.
31. G.O. Nos: 748, Law (Edn), 1924/12.5.1924 698, Law (Edn), 1926/26.4.1926.
32. G.O. No: 77, Law (Edn), 1922/19.1.1922.
33. G.O. No: 652, Judicial, 1925/18.11.1925
34. *Matruseva*, Tadpatri, 3 Aug, 1923.
35. *Harijan*, June 22, 1934, P. 148-149.
36. Of the 183 Gos which the author perused at the Madras State Archives, roughly about 96 Gos contain questions raised by Mr. Veerian.
37. G.O. No: 678, Law (Edn) 1925/2.5.1925.

> must be admitted in all public schools and that those institutions which disregard this rule will be severely dealt with?[38]

He had also recommended that Adi Dravidas in schools must be given instruction in weaving.[39] In the same year. Veerian wrote to the Secretary of the Education Department expressing his views in connection with the admission of Dalit pupils into the Board Elementary School at Kumaralingam thus:

> ...whether schools are located in rented buildings or in any buildings, they are public schools and provincial funds are given for the maintenance of the schools... I shall be glad to know as to what about the education of the adi dravida pupils until such promises are practically fulfilled... There is no use of public schools running on sectarian principles. This defeats entirely the democratic principles.[40]

Also in 1927, a question which he raised refers to more Dalit representation in public services.[41] The other Dalit leaders who took up the cause of that community included: A.S. Sahajanandam,[42] L.C. Guruswamy,[43] R.T. Kesavelu,[44] M.C. Madurai Pillai.[45]

b) Leaders in Deputations:

As leaders of the Dalits, L.C. Guruswamy and others submitted their views regarding separate electorates for the Dalits to the Indian Statutory Commission of 1927.[46] In their submission, the deputa-

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38. G.O. No: 680, Law (Edn) 1926/22.4.1926.
39. G.O. No: 1544, PW and L, 1926/20.10.1926.
40. G.O. No: 238, Law (Edn) 1926/15.2.1926.
41. G.O. No: 233, PW and L, 1927/31.1.1927.
42. G.O. No: 1022, PW and L Dept. 1928/11.4.1928-Author likes to provide just one reference to each of them, although many evidences could be cited.
43. G.O. No: 713, Law (Edn) 1926/26.4.1926. See also: *Statutory Commission, op. cit.*, P.1 Webster, "The Crucial Decade", *op.cit.*, p.4.
44. *Statutory commission, loc. cit.*, p.1
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Statutory Commission, op. cit.*, p.2-31.

tion requested that one fourth of the total number of seats in the Council should be set apart for the Dalits and asked that the Labour Department be strengthened and requested that it should continue under the Governor.[47] The deputation demanded: adequate representation in the local Councils and in the Taluk Boards and Municipalities, more educational facilities, more schools and hostels in every district, more scholarships and more facilities for higher studies for the Dalits.[48] They also asked for adequate representation in the public services.[49] In this connection, they demanded that a member of the Depressed Classes or a Dalit should be on the Public Services Commission.[50] They also wanted a Depressed Classes Minister—"to safeguard our interests we want our man"[51]. Infact, the demands made by the deputation clearly reveals for what the Dalit leaders were fighting.

c) Leaders in Conferences:

Apart from raising questions and drawing the attention of the Government to the needs of the Dalits in the legislature and submitting memoranda through deputations, the Dalit leaders seem to have played a vital part in the Dalit conferences. Veerian presided over the 8th Conference of the Depressed Classes Adi Dravidas.[52] This conference requested the Government to make secondary education free as far as the depressed classes were concerned and to award scholarships to deserving Adi Dravida pupils without making age reservation.[53] This conference also complained that

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47. *Ibid.*, P. 2.
48. *Ibid.*, P. 7-8.
49. *Ibid.*, p.12.
50. *Ibid.*, P.13.
51. *Ibid.*, P.26
52. *The 8th Conference of the Depressed Classes Adi Dravidas,* Tirupattur, Sat. 14th Feb, 1925. (hereafter 8th Conference) the author was able to get the resolutions of only two such conferences. *Guardian,* Dec. 29, 1938, P.818- refers to two such conferences. One held at Vellore and the other at Erode. The conference at Erode was presided over by M.C. Raja.
53. *8th Conference,* Resolution No:2.

the uncultivated lands intended for assignment to members of the Dalit communities were not being so assigned.[54] This conference also request the Government to appoint members of the Depressed Classes in various departments in the public service.[55]

Similarly, the 11th Madras presidency Adi-Dravida Conference, which was presided over by L.C. Guruswamy, adopted resolutions to draw the attention of the Government.[56] One resolution criticised the Labour Commissioner for his in-difference towards Depressed Classes or the Dalits. It resolved:

> 6 (a) that this conference views with disappointment that the Adi Dravidas are not adequately appointed in Government services-inspite of the repeated requests of the Adi Dravidas-though there are many capable men to hold those posts; (b) This Conference requests the Governor to Adi-Dravidianize services to the Labour Department.[57]

One other resolution that is very interesting reads as follows:

> 11 This conference is strongly of opinion that the absence of a member of the Depressed Classes in the Government Cabinet as calculated to bring about the sacrifice of their interests to those of the others, and therefore urges upon the Government the necessity of appointing one from the community to a place in the Cabinet at the next opportunity.[58]

Apart from these resolutions, this conference also resolved to request the Government:

> to introduce Compulsory Elementary Education; to increase the number of scholarships; to arrange for giving a free lunch meal;

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54. *Ibid.*, R.No.3.
55. *Ibid.*, R.No.11
56. *The 11th Madras Presidency Adi Dravida Conference, Madras,* 8th Jan, 1928, (hereafter 11th Conference)
57. *Ibid.*, R. No: 6(a) and (b)
58. *Ibid.*, R. No: 11

and to introduce vocational training in all elementary schools,[59] In these conferences, M.C. Raja, R. Veerian, Sahajanandam and others seem to have played an important role because most of the resolutions carried were moved by them.

Thus, the principal activities of the Dalit leaders were in relation to the legislature and Depressed Classes Conferences. What was the significance of these conferences and in what way did they contribute to the Dalits? These leaders, it would not be incorrect to say, were to a great extent reflecting the aspirations of the Depressed Classes or Dalits or, at least, the educated members of that class. As to attendance in the conferences, we may say that not many were represented. However, the conference resolutions point to a well-managed conference level organization. The role of the leaders in the legislature and outside at conferences suggest that during the period under study (1919-1939), the Dalits were getting class-conscious and were attempting class organization and endeavoured to establish themselves as a social group with distinct political interests entitled to special consideration by the Government.[60]

As to their ideology, one could say that they did not have a clear ideology, except that they wanted to better the condition of their fellowmen. They seem to have placed their major reliance upon the belief that the British Government would come to their aid. The first resolution, moved from the chair, in both the conferences we referred to was a vote of thanks to the British Government.[61] This kind of "homage" and "heart felt thanks" need

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59. *11th Conference,* op. cit., R. No: 9 a,b, c and d.

60. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op, cit.*, P. 171. See also: Webster, , "The Crucial Decade", *op. cit.*, P. 7 and 21.

61. For instance, the *11th Conference* Resolution No: 1 read as follows:

"This Conference of Adi Dravidas *humbly pays its homage of loyalty and obedience* to the British throne and prays to God that HM, the King Emperor and the Royal family may *long rule over us. so that through them* the British ideals of justice, freedom and progress may be established in the beloved mother-land, India." (emphasis mine)

to be understood in the context of Non-Brahmin rule in Madras presidency to which the Depressed Classes or the Dalits were not favourable. Home Rule meant, in that context, enslavement of the Dalits by the high-caste Non-Brahmins. This political concern was expressed with a renewed vigour by 1930. When the prospect of further advancement towards self-Government was becoming clearer, the leaders of the Depressed Classes repeated in conferences that in the interest of the Dalits the British Government should not part with power because Congress Raj meant (to them) crushing the Adi Dravidas.[62]

However, as Webster points out, the Depressed Classes or Dalit Movement failed to achieve unity of leadership, of organization or of ideology at National level,[63] it is even more true to say, it also failed at the provincial level.[64] But one should note that Webster's conclusion must be seen in the context of his definition of what constitutes a social movement, as we have seen above.

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62. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op. cit.*, p.171
63. Webster, "The Crucial Decade", *op. cit.*, p.21
64. See M.C. Raja's observation in *Indian Social Reformer*, Nov. 16, 1935, p.168-169.

CHAPTER II

DALIT COMMUNITIES

A discussion of the Depressed Classes Communities or the Dalits is inevitable because this study is directly related to them. Hence, a brief summary of their occupational, economic, religious, social, literary and political conditions is warranted in this section. In this attempt, first of all, a definition is required: what do we mean by depressed classes communities or the Dalits?

1. Depressed Classes or Dalit Communities:

As *Census Report for 1931* points out the term "Depressed Classes" does not lend itself to a precise definition.[1] This term comprehends untouchability though it is not synonymous with it. It connotes not only a low place in the caste hierarchy together with the existence of social and religious disabilities, but a low economic position as well[2]. Evidently Depressed Classes or Dalit Communities means a group of castes whose social, economic and other circumstances where such as to deserve special protection in a society.

Depressed or Dalit Communities were identified with different nomenclatures. As Mahar points out, they were called "untouchables", "Ex-untouchable" and "outcastes".[3] Apart from these denominations, the Census Report for 1931 suggests a few other names for them such as "Special Castes", and "exterior castes".[4]

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1. M.W.M. Yeatts,*Census of India, 1931,* Vol. XIV, Madras part I Report, Madras: The Government press, 1932, P.342 (hereafter *Census of India,1931)*
2. Mohinder Singh, *The Depressed Classes,* Bombay, Hind Kitabs Ltd publishers, 1947, P.1 (hereafter Mohinder Singh).
3. J. Michael Mahar (Ed) *The Untouchables in contemporary India,* Arizona, The University of Arizona press, 1972, P. 166 & 384. (hereafter *Contemporary India).*
4. Yeatts, *Census of India 1931,op.cit.,* p.342.

The Government of India Act of 1935 described them as "Scheduled Castes."[5] Before that they were called "Harijans" by Gandhi."[6] and "Depressed Classes" by the Government.[7] In various parts of the country, they became known by different denominations numbering more then 400.[8] Thus, for instance, in North and Central India, they were known as the Bhils, Chamars, or Mochis, Mahars or Mahtars, Balmiki, Dom, Dhobi, Kahars, Kanjar, Kahtik, Kori, Teli, Tharu. In Bombay, the Chuhar, Koli, Dhor, Mahar, Pollyas; In Bengal, the Chamar, Dom, Khatik, Mahar, Namasudras, pasi, sunri; In South India, the Chakkaliyans, Madigas, Nayadis, Panchamas and Ulladans.[9] Now the Dalits call themselves as Dalits. Whatever is the name or nomenclatures given to them, we could say that Depressed Classes or Dalits were those who were at the bottom rung of the society and who had disabilities which encompassed their life in all spheres.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the, Dalits were said to constitute one sixth of the total population.[10] Although there are variations in the estimate of the number of depressed castes, almost all sources point to one sixth of the total population. In Madras presidency, their number, according to 1931 Census Report, was 7,300,000. However, the Census Commission contends that the number of depressed castes should have been eight million or about fifteen and half per cent of the population of the province.[11] It is said today that Dalits number about 200 million or one fourth of the total population.

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5. M.S.A. Rao, "Themes in the Ideology of protest Movements", *Some Aspects, Op. cit.,* P. 232.
6. Harijan means people of God. Gandhi, to show his interest in these people, called them Harijans.
7. L.R. Balley (Ed) *Dr. Ambedkar on Poona pact,* Jullundar, Bhean Patrika publications, 1973, P.6 (hereafter *poona pact).*
8. Rajendra Singh Vatsa, *The Depressed Classes of India,*New Delhi, Gitanjali Prakasham, 1977, Introduction, p.(ii) (hereafter*Depressed Classes).*
9. Vatsa,*Depressed Classes, op.cit.,* P.(ii) see also: *Census Report 1931, op.cit.,* p.349
10. Vatsa, *loc. cit.,* p.(ii)

2. Occupational Status:

As to their occupational status, the picture of the Depressed Classes, or the Dalits at the beginning of the decade, presented in the provincial reports of 1931 reveals both common features and variations from caste to caste and region to region.[12] In Travancore, for instance, 83% each of the Kuravars, Parayans and Pulayans were engaged in field agriculture.[13] In Madras Presidency, the depressed classes or the Dalits were the "backbone of agriculture labour."[14] There were also leather workers, artisans and village servants among them. They lived as labourers on lands belonging to the higher classes.[15] G.A. Natesan, at the Madras Depressed Classes Conference, pointed out the true picture when he said "...without them (Depressed Classes or the Dalits) agriculture would be impossible, the economy of Indian life would be most seriously upset."[16] Thus, the Dalits in Madras Presidency generally were agricultural labourers; and, in their occupation, they were actually the slaves of the higher or landed classes. Says Yeatts about them: ".....In one form or another they have been the victims of an agrestic serfdom wherever they have been."[17]

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11. Yeatts, *Census Report 1931.op.cit.*, p.345-46. Yeatts says "...eight million would have to be taken as the round figure for them instead of seven...."—The 1921 Census Report gave 6,372,074 as their total. See also: *ISR*, Dec. 18,1910, p.183. Editorial reads; "Madras, it is well known, contains the largest proportion of the depressed castes."
12. Webster, "The Crucial Decade", *op.cit.*, p.2.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Appaswamy, "New Spiritual" *op.cit.*, p.565. See also: *Census of India 1931, op.cit.*, p.342. Vatsa, *Depressed Classes. op.cit.*, p.(iii)
15. P.O.Philip, "Depressed Classes: Economic and social conditions" in *Mohinder Singh, op. cit.*, p.5.See also: Goudie "Fact and Features of Mass Movements", *East and West*, 1918, p.310-23 (hereafter "Fact and Features")
16. *ISR*, July 30, 1911, p.569-70.
17. Yeatts, *Census of India 1931,op.cit.*, p.342.

3. Economic Status:

Consideration of the occupational Status of the Dalits leads us to the question of their economic status. Actually, it was their occupation which determined their economic status. Living as agriculture labourers, most of them were dependent on their landlords, and received meagre wages. One source points out that their poverty was due to their dependence on the caste Community.[18] Their low economic status determined by their meagre earnings made them take advance from their employers, and thus, the Dalits, who were involved in agriculture in particular, could never repay in full and therefore, they were tied to the soil.[19] Thus, the Depressed Classes or the Dalit communities were poor and powerless.[20]

4. Religious Status:

As to their religious status, the Depressed Classes, or the Dalits were animists and followed the primitive religion of India's aboriginal inhabitants of 4000 years ago.[21] Their religion consisted largely of a perpetual and haunting terror of the evil spirits of the village. Goudie depicts the Depressed classes religion appropriately when he says:

> In religion he is an animist;
> he has peopled the darkness about
> him with foul spectres of his own
> debased imagination, and lives in
> constant fear of the creatures of
> his own superstition.[22]

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18. D. Tickell, "poverty among village Christians," *NCCR* 1935 (UTC Vol.55), p. 621.
19. Yeatts, *Census of India 1931, op. cit.*, p.342
20. Webster, "Theological Construction", *op.cit* p.3.
21. Mynors, "Mass Movements in India," *East and West,* 1920, (UTC VOL. XVIII), p.38.
22. Goudie, "Fact and Features", *op.cit.,* p.311

The Dalits were not allowed to enter a Hindu temple.[23] Ghurye says:"....certain low castes are looked down upon as so unclean that they may not enter the courtyard of the great temples...."[24] As a result of this religious disability, the depressed classes or the Dalits had their own priests and deities.[25]

5. Social Status:

As a rule, the Dalits lived outside the villages in miserable hovels, filthy to the last degree and surrounded by filth.[26] Lying, drinking, stealing and defrauding were common among them. To this Ghurye adds:

> ...In the Tamil and Malayalam regions very frequently different quarters are occupied by separate castes or sometimes the village is divided into three parts: that occupied by the dominant caste in the village or by the Brahmins, that allotted to the Shudras, and the one reserved for the Panchamas or untouchables.[27]

Mencher adds:

> ...The Paraiyans lived outside the main village in separate Cheris or Harijan hamlets. The Cheris were generally located on the least desirable lands, such as areas subject to flooding

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23. A.F. Painter, "The untouchables of India and Christ", *East and West,* 1910, p.197 (hereafter "The Untouchables of India") See also: P.O. Phillip, "The Harijan Movement in India in relation to Christianity", *International Review of Missions,* 1935, p.162. (hereafter "Harijan Movement)"
24. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India,* Bombay, popular Prakashan, 1969, p.9 (hereafter *Caste and Race)*
25. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op. cit.,* p. 145.

23. A.F. Painter, "The untouchables of India and Christ", *East and West,* 1910, p.197 (hereafter "The Untouchables of India") See also: P.O. Phillip, "The Harijan Movement in India in relation to Christianity", *International Review of Missions,* 1935, p.162. (hereafter "Harijan Movement)"
24. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India,* Bombay, popular Prakashan, 1969, p.9 (hereafter *Caste and Race)*
25. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op. cit.,* p. 145.

> by the monsoon. Often over-crowded, they rarely possessed such rudimentary facilities as a clean source of drinking water.[28]

The common social disabilities from which they all suffered were untouchability, prohibitions against temple entry and use of village wells and, segregation of school.[29] Untouchability was the worst disability from which the Dalits suffered.[30] Goudie, a Methodist Missionary at Ikkadu and an ardent advocate of the Depressed Classes, brings home the point when he says:

> ...The pariah is a social leper; and lives apart; he is not only an 'untouchable', he is an 'Unapproachable', his very shadow defiles, and contamination from his person carries for many yards.[31]

Thus, the Dalits had a serious social disability.

6. Literacy:

Generally the Dalits were denied even the basic human right of using public schools. Painter's observation that, "....It was a crime to teach them to read"[32] has no exaggeration because even in the early '40's' members in the legislature in the Madras Presidency were pointing out this disability.[33] In short, ignorance and illiteracy was the way of life of the Dalits or the depressed castes.[34]

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26. P.O.Philip, "Depressed Classes: Economic and social conditions", *Mohinder Singh, op.cit.*, p.5.
27. Ghurye, *Caste and Race, op.cit.*, p.10.
28. Joan P. Mencher, "Continuity and change in an ex- untouchable Community of South India," *Contemporary India,op.cit.*, p. 39
29. Webster, "The Crucial Decade", *op.cit.*, p.3.
30. Yeatts, *Census of India 1931, op.cit.* p.345-346.
31. Goudie, "Fact and Features," *op.cit.*, p.310
32. Painter, "The Untouchables of India," op.cit., p.197.
33. G.O. No: 225, Law (Edn), 1935/8.2.1935. P.5 Mr. Veerian, for instance, complained "...it is seen that while in certain cases depressed classes pupils are not being admitted freely into the general schools."
34. P.O.Philip, "Depressed classes: Economic and social Conditions." *Mohinder Singh, op.cit.*, p.5.

7. Political status;

Without economic power and with complete social ostracisation, one can easily imagine the political status of the Dalits. Economically they were poor; they were indebted; uneducated, and were at the bottom rung of the society in all respects. In this depressed and downtrodden condition, the Dalits had no political power. Saraswathi points out:

> ....owing to its general back-wardness, this group had never been politically dominant and owing to its smallness in size could scarcely hope to become a ruling class.[35]

In sum, the depressed or Dalit communities were a lot of miserable creatures, socially ostracised, economically exploited, educationally backward and politically deprived. To such communities the Christian Mission came with a view to uplifting them from their depressed status. After them, the Government involved itself with the Depressed Classes or the Dalits and attempted to take some ameliorative measures. Voluntary welfare organizations also emerged in the late 19th century and in the 20th century to help these communities. To these voluntary welfare organizations, we first turn our attention, in the next section.

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35. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p. 146.

CHAPTER III

DALITS AND THE AGENCIES WHICH WERE INVOLVED WITH THEM

Many agencies were interested in and involved with the Dalits in the late 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.[1] Of these, Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Depressed Classes Mission, Gandhi and Congress, Justice party, self-Respect Movement, Government and the Christian Church were the principal agencies. Although it is difficult to pinpoint which of these agencies were the first to create an awakening among the Dalits it may be said that Christian Missions were one of the first to have created conditions of self-awareness.[2] The Government, both Central and Madras Provincial Governments, also took steps to redress the grievances of the Dalits and in this direction did some ameliorative work on their behalf. In other words, the Government and the Christian Church did more than any other voluntary agency or organization, and therefore they deserve to be given special attention. But before that, we start with the other agencies mentioned afore and outline what they did for the depressed classes, or the Dalits.

1. a) The Brahmo Samaj:

The Brahmo Samaj was one of the reform movements among the upper castes/classes which created conditions of self-awareness among the Dalits.[3] The Brahmo Samaj was established by Raja Ram Mohan Roy on the 20th Aug, 1828.[4] The movement was later led by Debendranath Tagore, Keshub Chandra Sen and others.[5] The Brahmo Samaj was a theistic society opposed to polytheism,

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1. M.S.A. Rao, "Backward Classes Movement", *Some Aspects*, op.cit., p. 235.
2. *Ibid.*

mythology and idolatry. Throughout its long history the Brahmo Samaj had remained vigorously theistic and opposed to idolatry and had always advocated progressive social reform.[6] This movement was also against social and religious practices such as burning of widows, child marriage, polygamy and the prohibition of remarriage for widows.[7]

The Brahmo Samaj was largely an elite movement, its followers coming from the upper strata of society who were English educated and Westernized. It mainly addressed itself to such problems of the upper castes as Sati, child marriage, Kulinism etc. It maybe noted that Brahmo Samaj also had a programme for the Depressed Classes or the Dalits although very few among the latter became brahmos. The programme for the depressed classes mainly consisted of opening schools for them and supporting their amelioration.[8] K.C. Sen, after his return from England in 1870, called upon the members of the Prarthana Samaj, a variant of the Brahmo Samaj, to do something practical to elevate the lower castes. Accordingly, the leaders established night schools and two of these schools were for the children of the untouchable classes.[9]

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3. M.S.A. Rao, "Backward Classes Movement", *Some Aspects,* op.cit., p. 235.
4. Manilal C. Parekh, *The Brahmo Samaj,* Rajkot. Oriental Christ House, 1929. p.3.
5. Frank Lillingston, *The Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj,* London, Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1901, p.66-73. See also: R.C. Das, *Brahmo Samaj,* a short history, presidential address at 78th All India Brahmo Conference, Bangalore Session, 1968, p.20-21.
6. C.F. Andrews and Girija K. Mookerjee, *The Rise and Growth of Congress in India, (1832-1920). Meerut, Meenakshi Prakashan, 1967, p.9. (hereafter Rise and Growth)*
7. ————————-, Religion and Development in Asian Societies, Sri Lanka: Marga Publications, 1974, p.133 (hereafter *Religion and Development*)
8. *Religion and Development, loc. cit.,* p.133
9. Justice Chaudravarker in Rajendra Singh Vatsa, *Depressed Classes, op. cit.,* p.120

The Census Report for 1931 reveals the fact that the Brahmo Samaj had never made great headway in South India.[10] Although the Brahmo Samaj did not have numerous adherents, yet it seemed to have been active in Madras. A certain R. Subbukrishnayya, after a period of training in the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj, was reported to have devoted himself to work on behalf of the Depressed Classes.[11] The Madras Brahmo Samaj published literature in English and Vernaculars, maintained a library and reading room, arranged lectures, worked in the pariah settlements and held services ever Sunday morning in its hall and Sunday evening on the beach. It strove to further such activities as widow remarriage and intercaste dinners.[12]

Although the Brahmo Samaj was interested in the amelioration of the Dalits, yet it was a Hindu reform movement, and therefore, it mainly addressed itself to the problems of the upper castes, such as emancipation of women. The deprived sections were given a place in its programme of activities, but the work for the Dalits was only one of its many activities. Thus, the Brahmo Samaj interest in the Dalits was very limited.

b) The Arya Samaj:

The Arya Samaj was started by Dayanand Saraswati, a Hindu monk and preacher, who was born in 1824 in the small town of Tankara, in the Kathiawar state of Morvi.[13] In 1875, Dayanand conceived the idea of founding the Arya Samaj. Unlike the leading members of the Brahmo Samaj Dayanand never learned English. He wrote in Hindi. This made him more intelligible to the masses in North India, with the result that the Arya Samaj became, broadly

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10. Yeatts, *Census of India*, 1931, *op. cit.*, p. 321 The Census Commissioner says: "... They (Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj) are North Indian importations which have taken little root (in the South)"..
11. *ISR*, Dec. 18, 1910, p.183.
12. Yeatts, *Census of India 1931, op. cit.*, p. 321
13. Andrews and Mookerjee, *Rise and Growth, op.cit.*, p.15.

speaking a mass movement.[14] Although the Arya Samaj claimed to be a country-wide movement, it was strong mainly in North India.[15]

Dayanand was perturbed by the degrading conditions of the Dalits. It is reported that he sometimes spent sleepless nights worrying over their lot.[16] He condemned the atrocious treatment meted out to the lower classes and publicly declared that all men were equal. However, Dayanand could not contribute much personally toward the actual upliftment of the Dalits because of his sudden death in 1883. After Dayanand, the leaders of the Arya Samaj paid special attention to the uplift of the Dalits.[17] The Arya Samaj repudiated caste and opposed child marriage.[18] It sponsored a programme, "Shuddhi Movement", in 1891 to reconvert the low caste Christian and Muslim converts to Hinduism.[19] It gave the untouchables the right to wear the sacred thread, the symbol of twice-born status, and also established educational institutions for the benefit of the untouchables.[20]

The Arya Samaj was active in the Punjab and United Provinces—in Sialkot, Gurdaspur, Hoshiapur, Lahore and so on. It had four branches in Madras and Madura also.[21] In order to make the

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14. *Ibid.*

15. Radhey Shyam Pareek, *Contribution of Arya Samaj in the making of Modern India 1875-1947,* Jaipur: Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1965, p. 87 (hereafter *Arya Samaj*) See also Appaswamy, "New Spiritual", *op.cit,.,* p. 568: Yeatts, *Census of India 1931, op. cit.,* p. 321.

16. Pareek, *Arya Samaj, op.cit.,* p.127

17. *Ibid.,* p. 136

18. Lajpat Rai, *A History of the Arya Samaj,* Calcutta Orient Longmans, 1967, p. 113 & 119 (hereafter *A History*)

19. M.S.A. Rao, "Backward Classes Movements" *Some Aspects, op.cit.,* p.236. See also: John C.B. Webster, "Some Socio-religious Movements among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the 19th century", (unpublished) U.T.C. Library, p.14 (here after "Socio-religious movement")

20. M.S.A. Rao, "Backward Classes Movement", *Some aspects, op.cit.,* p. 236. See also Lajpat Rai, *A history,* op. cit., p. 121; Pareek, Arya Samaj, op.cit., p.167.

21. Appaswamy, "New Spiritual", *op. cit.,* p. 568.

Dalits socially, economically and religiously advanced, the Arya Samaj opened a number of Pathshalas. It undertook reform works among Nayak and criminal tribes in Uttar Pradesh, sweepers community in Delhi, and in Lahore among sweepers and chamars.[22]

That the Arya Samaj took far greater interest than the Brahmo Samaj in the uplift of the untouchables is evident from the accounts given of its work by many sources. However, its programmes for the uplift of the Dalits was largely limited to North India. Its attempts to meet the aspirations of the low and outcastes for higher social status needs to be seen in the context of the Dalits attempting to convert in large number to Christianity.[23]

c) Depressed Classes Mission:

The Depressed Classes Mission was founded on 18th Oct., 1906, by V.R. Shinde in Bombay.[24] Shinde advocated founding of a mission by Indians for the elevation of the lower classes and he took the first initiative himself.[25] One of the chief aims of the mission was to improve the sanitary condition of the untouchables by teaching them habits of cleanliness and temperance, affording cheap or absolutely free medical treatment.[26] The first prospectus of the Mission specified the objects as follows:

> to elevate the condition of the depressed classes, namely: the Mahars, Chamars, Pariahs, and other neglected low castes in India by 1) promoting education, 2) providing work 3) removing social disabilities and 4) preaching to them the

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22. *Ibid.*, p. 568-569: "... The Arya Samaj... is distinctively Hindu... The removal of untouchability, the abolition of the caste system, and the encouragement of inter- cast marriage are among the main social objectives of this powerful organization...".
23. Webster, "Socio-religious Movements," *op. cit.*, p.14.
24. M.S.A. Rao, "Backward Classes Movement", *Some Aspects op. cit.*, p.236. See also: S. Natarajan, *A century of Social Reform in India*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962, p. 113. (hereafter *Social Reform*) *Indian Social Reformer*, Sep. 25, 1910. p. 38
25. "A Mission to the Depressed Classes". *Harvest Field*, 1906. p.402-403.
26. Saint Nihal Singh in *Depressed Classes*, *op.cit.*, p. 61

ideals of the universal religion, personal character and good citizenship.[27]

Shinde took up the work with missionary zeal, touring the country to educate opinion. Wherever he went, day and night schools were opened for the children and adults of the depressed classes, hostels and free dispensaries were started and a spirit was created among the depressed classes or the Dalits themselves which led them to revolt against existing conditions.[28]

The All India Depressed Classes Mission conducted 17 centers with thirty educational institutions including five boarding and four technical schools in 1913. About 1,230 pupils of depressed classes were enrolled in their schools and Rs. 25,000 was the total expenditure incurred in this enterprise.[29] The All India Mission had four branches, namely, Poona, Bombay, Hubli and Nagpur. There were twelve more centres at Mangalore, Akola, Bhavanagar, Amroati, Satara, Malvan, Dapoli, Thana, Metheran, Rajkot, Yeotmal, Cocanada and Madras.[30]

The Depressed Classes Mission Society of Madras was established in Madras in 1909.[31] Justice Sankaran Nair was the President of the Madras Mission. It had two day schools and four night schools at Vyasarpadi Puliantope, Choolai and Vepery respectively.[32] Eight teachers worked in these schools and 203 scholars benefitted from these Mission schools.[33] The Mission society at Madras had two full-time workers. One of them visited the different localities inhabited by the Dalits and spoke to elderly people on the evils of drink, importance of cleanliness, the value of co-operation, education of their children and allied matters.[34] Apart from conducting day and night schools, the Mission at Madras and also elsewhere seemed to have distributed clothes and prizes to the children of depressed classes. Sometimes, the Mission provided

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27. N. Ranganathan in *Depressed Classes, op.cit.*, p.174-175
28. Natarajan, *Social Reform, op.cit.*, p. 171
29. *ISR*, Aug. 24, 1913, p. 616.
30. *ISR*, Aug 30, 1914, p. 619-20.

meals to them.[35] The Mission also conducted boarding homes and claimed the resources of the education department.[36] In 1918, the Mission Society conducted a conference which went into the question of abolition of untouchability. An *Indian Social Reformer* editorial observed:

> ... It was an excellent idea of the depressed classes Mission Society to hold a conference expressly with the object of bringing about the abolition of the custom of regarding certain castes as untouchables.[37]

In 1918, Shinde is reported to have submitted a draft to the special session of the Indian National Congress, proposing reserved seats for the depressed classes in the various councils. However the subject was not taken up by the special session. When M.C.Raja's bill for the abolition of untouchability was moved in the Legislative Council, the Depressed Classes Mission Society of India passed the following resolution supporting it:

> ... The Executive Committee of the Depressed Classes Mission Society of India is in full sympathy with the objects and reasons stated in the preamble of the Bill, and it hereby accords its full support to it.[38]

Thus, the Depressed Classes Mission of India attempted to serve the depressed classes or the Dalits through its educational institutions and other means cited afore and in this enterprise, the Mission seems to have done commendable service to the Dalits especially in Bombay, Mangalore and Madras.

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31. Natarajan, *Social Reform, op.cit.*, p. 123.
32. *ISR*, Sept. 25, 1910, p.38
33. *ISR*, Sept. 21, 1913, p. 30-31.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *ISR.*, April 4, 1915, p. 367.
36. *ISR.*, Aug. 3, 1913, p. 577.
37. *ISR*, March 24, 1918, p. 349.
38. *Harijan*, June 22, 1934, p.148-149.

d) Congress and Gandhi:

It is an irony of history that the Indian National Congress, which was originally conceived by Hume as an "all India National Union to concentrate more or less on social questions" did not seriously take into consideration socio-economic questions for about the first thirty five years of its existence. From 1885 to 1920, the Congress devoted itself almost exclusively to the attainment of political objectives and touched the socio-economic problems only in so far as they had a bearing on its politics.[39] The Congress at its Calcutta Session in 1917, had urged "upon the people of India the necessity, Justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the depressed classes"[40] But it remained more a pious resolution than a sincere resolve to wipe out the cause of untouchability. The Congress with a few notable exceptions, continued this practical indifference till 1920, when Gandhi's advent changed its entire character. Gandhi refuted the argument that the work of social-organization could be undertaken only after the achievement of political independence. He told the Congress:

> ... The sooner it is recognized that many of our social evils impede our march towards our cherished goal. To postpone social reform is not to know the meaning of Swaraj.[41]

Among those who fought against untouchability Gandhi occupies a unique place. From the beginning of his entrance into public life in India (1920), Gandhi worked to remove untouchability.[42] Two Indian Christians make the following observations:

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39. P.D. Kaushick, *The Congress Ideology and programme 1920-1947, Bombay: Allied publishers private Limited 1964, p. 140 (hereafter the Congress)* See also Andrews and Mookerjee, *Rise and Growth, op.cit.* p.94.
40. *Young India,* June 28, 1928.
41. *Report of the Thirty Second Indian National Congress,* Calcutta, 1917. p. 128-129-published by the Reception Committee in 1918.
42. Eleanor Zelliot, "Gandhi and Ambedkar", *Contemporary India, op.cit.,* p. 72.

> ....The removal of untouchability has been one of the important items in his programme of work for the country... It has to be admitted that he has succeeded in rousing the people to a keen sense of the social and economic wrongs afflicted on the depressed classes.[43]
>
> ... Ever since Mahatma Gandhi became the leading influence in the Congress the removal of untouchability and the uplift of the depressed classes has been one of the important planks of the Congress platform.[44]

Gandhi maintained that ".. in Hinduism there is no sanction for treating a single human-being as untouchable.."[45] His fight against untouchability took the form not of a denunciation of orthodox Hinduism but of an attempt to awaken a sense of social justice and duties among the caste Hindus. He asked the Hindus "... to repent and change their hearts"[46] He is also quoted as having said: "I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable"[47]. Gandhi described untouchability at various times as a curse, an excrescence on Hinduism, a poison, a snake, a canker, a hydra-headed monster, a great blot, a device of satan, a hideous untruth, Dyerism and O'Dyerism, and the bar sinister.[48] Gandhi's participation in the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25) gave him his first opportunity to act publicly on behalf of the untouchables.

Under Gandhi's influence, the Congress slowly changed its attitude towards the depressed classes or the Dalits. The Ahmedabad Congress in 1921 decided that "no one shall be accepted as a volunteer who does not sign the pledge" which included:

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43. P.O. Phillip, "The Harijan Movement", *op.cit.*, p. 162-72.
44. Appaswamy, "New Spiritual", *op.cit.* p. 572.
45. *Young India*, May 11, 1921.
46. *Young India*, Jan 19, 1921.
47. *Young India*, April 27, 1921.
48. Zelliot, "Gandhi and Ambedkar", *Contemporary India, op. cit.*, p. 73

> ... with God as witness I solemnly declare that... (5) As a Hindu I believe in the justice and necessity of removing the evil of untouchability and shall on all possible occasions seek personal contact with and endeavour to render service to the submerged classes.[49]

On the 12th Feb, 1922, the Working Committee, at its meeting at Bardoli, declared removal of untouchability to be an integral part of the Congress programme. From 1924 to 1931, the Congress several times repeated its resolve to root out untouchability and in 1929, the Working Committee, at its meeting at Calcutta, appointed a sub-committee to carry on its crusade against untouchability, which achieved considerable success in improving the lot of untouchables and securing for them access to wells, temples and schools.[50] However, the claim of the Dalits to be considered as a political minority was not admitted by the Congress which asserted that it represented the Dalits as much as any other group.[51] At the Round Table Conference, Gandhi, representing Congress, said: ".. I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast mass of the untouchables"[52] and he asserted that "... separate electorates to the untouchables will ensure their bondage in perpetuity"[53] Gandhi's interest in the Dalits had a political dimension also. He did not want to lose the support of the vast mass of the Dalits. That was why he went on insisting that he represented the Depressed Classes or the Dalits.

The Congress Session at Karachi in 1931 and the Working Committee at Calcutta in 1937 passed the following resolution favouring the Dalits:

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49. Kaushik, *The Congress, op.cit.*, p. 145.
50. *Ibid.*, p.146. See also: Zelliot, "Gandhi and Ambedkar," *Contemporary India, op.cit,* p. 83
51. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p. 173
52. Balley, *Poona pact, op. cit.*, p. 36
53. *Young India,* Nov. 12, 1931. See also: *ISR,* July 21, 1934, p. 740.

> ... All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort, maintained out of state, or local funds dedicated by private persons for the use of general public... No disability to attach to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste or creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office or power or honour and in the exercise of any trade or calling.[54]

Whatever Gandhi's motive was, he certainly seemed to have emerged as a champion of the Dalits. He called untouchables "Harijans", that is, the children of God. He initiated Harijan Sevak Sangh or Servants of Untouchables Society, with its triple programme of economic relief, education and legislation to make untouchability illegal.[55] The activities of the Sangh were directed along the lines of persuading caste Hindus to open temples for worship to the Harijans and to remove the disabilities imposed on them, of conducting day and night schools for Harijan children and adults, of establishing hostels for Harijan students, and giving them scholarship and of improving the economic and sanitary conditions in which the Harijan lived.[56] Gandhi Undertook an extensive all India tour in 1933-34, exhorted his countrymen to remove the sin of untouchability and collected nearly eight lakhs for welfare work among the Harijans.[57]

The advent of the Congress Ministries in 1937 gave a great boost to the anti-untouchability campaign. For the first time Harijans were given a share in shaping the destiny of the country by being appointed as Ministers and Parliamentary secretaries. In Madras Presidency alone as many as three such measures— the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act, the Malabar Temple Entry Act,

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54. Shankarao Deo, *Congress and the problem of Minorities,* Allahabad, 1947, p. 128-129 (Deb was the General Secretary of the AICC then) See also: March Galanter, "The abolition of disabilities—untouchability and law, "Contemporary India, "*op.cit.*," p.238
55. Kaushik, *The Congress, op.cit.*, p.47, cf. Zelliot, "Gandhi and Ambedkar", *Contemporary India, loc.cit.*, p.86
56. Phillip, "*The Harijan Movement*", *op.cit.*, p.166
57. *Harijan,* Nov. 17, 1933, See also: *ISR,* July 21, 1934, p. 740

the Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act—were enacted. In the educational field, special funds were allotted for the Depressed Classes, special scholarships were provided and special schools opened for them.[58]

e) Justice party:

On 20th Dec. 1916, the following item was furnished by the Hindu:

> At a conference held on 20th Nov, it was resolved to start a co-operative for publishing a newspaper advocating the cause of the non-Brahmin Community and also that a Political Association be formed to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of the same community. Political Association under the name of South Indian Liberal Federation.[59]

Thus was born the SILF which later came to be known as the Justice party. The Justice party was the political expression of the Non-Brahmin Movement in the Madras Presidency.[60] Prior to 1916 and the founding of the Justice party, political activity in Madras Presidency was dominated by Brahmins.[61] The Justice party had come into being as a means for the non-Brahmin struggle for political and educational influence.[62] To fight against this Brahmin dominance certain non-Brahmin castes joined together and created the Justice party. In 1916 Dr. T.M. Nair, Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar and the Raja of Panagal with Sri P. Thiyagaraja Chettiar established

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58. Kaushik, *The Congress, op.cit.*, p. 149-50
59. *The Hindu,* Dec. 20, 1916
60. David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamil Nadu,* New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1977, p. 19. (Hereafter Congress in Tamil Nadu) See also: M.S.A. Rao, "Backward Classes Movement," *Some Aspects, op.cit.* p. 237-238.
61. Marguerite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India,* New Jersey, Princeton University, 1976, p. 18(hereafter *The Politics*) See also: Eugene F. Irshick, *Politics and Social conflict in South India,* California, University of California, 1969, p. 359-61. (hereafter *politics and Social Conflict*)
62. Anita Diehl, *Periyar E.V. Ramaswami,* New Delhi, B.I. Publications, 1978, p. 14) (hereafter *Periyar*)

the South India People's Association, which in the same year published the Non-Brahmin Manifesto.[63] Finally in 1917, they set up the SILF which later came to be called the Justice party.[64] A number of Christians were in the Justice party. Arokiaswamy Mudaliar, Minister for Development from 1926- 28, in Justice party Ministry, was a Christian. O. Kandaswamy Chetty, a publicist of Justice party in the early stages, was a Christian; A.T. Panneerselvam, Home Member of Governor's Executive Council, who hailed from a Udaiyar Family, was also a Christian.[65] V. Chakkarai Chetty was also a member of the Justice party before he went over to congress in 1936.[66] Kumaraswami Tampoe was another prominent Christian who was in Justice party.[67] In general, the castes which formed the Justice party were the higher (or "forward" or "non- Backward") non-Brahmin castes.[68]

In Dec. 1920, general elections in the provinces inaugurated a new Constitution for the Government of India. It created a new all India Legislative Assembly at Delhi. In the Madras Presidency, the constitution laid down a scheme of dyarchy or dual rule.[69] The Justice party co-operated with the British to form the Government in the Madras Presidency under the Government of India Act of

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63. P.Spratt, *DMK in power,* Bombay: Nachiketa publications limited, 1970, p.20 (hereafter *DMK*) cf. Irshick, *Politics and Social Conflict, op.cit.,* p.48, 358-367; Saraswathi, *Minorities op.cit.,* p.199-209
64. Arnold, *Congress in Tamil Nadu, op.cit.,* p.19—says Arnold "...From this beginning sprang the South India Liberal Federation, better known as the Justice party, which claimed to represent the interests of all non-Brahmins in the Presidency, including Muslims, Christians and Untouchables."
65. Christopher John Baker, *The Politics of South India* 1920-1937, India, Vikas publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1976, p. 327-335. (hereafter *The Politics*)
66. *Ibid.,* p. 277, See also Irshick, *Polities and Social Conflict, op. cit.,* p. 317.
67. Irshick, *Politics and Social Conflict, op.cit.,* p. 122.
68. Spratt, *DMK., op. cit.,* p. 19.
69. Baker, *The Politics, op.cit.,* p.1

1919.[70] Justice party won 57 seats[71] and thus formed the first Justice party ministry. In the 1923 election the Justice party won 61 out of 98 seats; and in 1926, 56 out of 98. But the Justice party's political end was sealed in 1937, in the first elections held under the Government of India Act of 1935.[72]

Although the Justice party claimed to represent all people in the presidency, including Christians, Muslims and Untouchables, nevertheless it remained essentially for the higher non-Brahmin castes. Irshick observes thus:

> ... very soon after taking office the Justice party severed its connections with the Untouchable groups. Once in power, it became almost entirely a caste Hindu party with little interest in social reform and the untouchables were gradually pushed out of the Justice party.[73]

In a similar view Deihl also observes: "... For all its limitations the Justice party had greatly consolidated the position of non-Brahmin caste Hindus and given them the confidence they needed."[74] Thus, the depressed people or the Dalits were excluded from its programme.

All that the Justice party had to its credit with respect to the Dalits during its twelve year rule in the Madras Presidency from 1920-1936, with a break from 1926-1930, was the creation of the office of Labour Commissioner to look after the depressed classes.[75] Nothing significant seems to have been done by the Justice party for the depressed classes, although it claimed to have done well

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70. Chopra, (Ed-Gazetteers) *India-Social structure,* Delhi, publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1969, p. 81-82 (hereafter *Social Structure*).
71. Devanandan says that Justice party contested elections while spratt says that it did not. Spratt says that members belonging to Justice party got elected, but the party as such did not contest.
72. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p.81
73. Irshick, *Politics and Social Conflict, op.cit.* p. 188-189.
74. Deihl, *Periyar, op.cit.*, p. 15
75. Yeatts, *Census of India 1931, op.cit.*, p. 343.

for them by starting the Labour Department.[76] The observation of Irshick strengthens this view:

> The aim of the Justice party was to enable these non-Brahmins to supplant the Brahmins, while keeping the untouchables at a good economic, educational and political distance... with power, the Justice party gradually limited its objectives and closed its ranks pursuing the needs of non-Brahmin caste Hindus to the exclusion of other groups. Such as the untouchables and the Muslims.[77]

Even in its heyday, the backward non-Brahmins and the Dalits complained that they received no benefit from it.[78] In 1922, Sir P.T. Chettiar refused to support a law against untouchability.[79] That alone makes clear the attitude of the Justice party towards the Dalits. In 1922, the Justice party Government promulgated a G.O. thereafter called "the communal G.O.", which specified the proportions of appointments to Government services to be filled from various communities.[80] According to this G.O. only one seat out of 12 appointments was to be set apart for the depressed classes and others. Since the "others" included many other communities, this order makes clear once again the attitude of the Justice party towards the Dalits. The Dalit leaders like M.C.Raja left the Justice party in 1923 and he complained that the Justice party had not fulfilled its obligations to the depressed classes.[81]

The Christian presence in the Justice party and in its ministry did not seem to have done anything positive for the Dalits. Even a prominent Christian member of the Justice party like Chakkarai and Christian ministers in the Justice party Government like Arokiaswamy Mudaliar, and A.T. Panneerselvam, did not seem to

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76. Spratt,, *DMK, op.cit.*, p.19
77. Irshick, *Politics and Social Conflict, op.cit.*, p. 192 & 218.
78. Spratt, *DMK, op.cit.*, p. 19
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, p. 26. See also Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p. 89-92.
81. *Sudarsini*, June 15, 1926. See also: *Andhra Patrika*, April 6, 1923.

have expressed their concern in favour of the Dalits. Two explanations could be supplied for the apathy towards the depressed communities or the Dalits. First, the Justice party Government acted as though it was only for the higher caste non- Brahmins and the Christian members in the Government seem to have gone along with the party and the Government policy. Secondly, the Christians who were in the Justice party and Justice party Government themselves were from the so called "higher caste non-Brahmins." Since they themselves came from such higher non-Brahmin castes, perhaps they had no real concern for the Dalits. In any event they did not promote the interests of their fellow Christians who belonged to the Depressed Classes or the Dalit Communities.

Thus, the Justice party, which claimed to represent, all people including the untouchables, did not do anything significant to change the condition of the Dalits. It utilized its power only to promote sectional interests,[82] the interests of the higher—caste non-Brahmins, and not the interests of the depressed classes and untouchables, although it claimed that it did a lot for the depressed classes.

f) Periyar and the Self-Respect Movement

E.V. Ramaswami Naiker of Dravida Kazhagam, later called "Periyar", was born on Sept 17, 1879 at Erode.[83] He had only five years of formal education. He married a 13 year old girl. Nagammal, when he was 19. He became a Sanyasi 6 years after his marriage. He wandered, visited mutts, chatrams and institutions of Sanyasis. These wanderings enabled him to study the Hindu scriptures, and to meet all kinds of people with conflicting ideologies.[84]

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82. Chopra, *Social Structure, op.cit.*, p. 81
83. Diehl, *Periyar, op.cit.*, p. 8
84. C. Lawrence, "Man in Christian Tradition and in the writings of EVR: A Comparative Study", (BD Thesis — unpublished), UTC Library, Bangalore, 1976, p. 47 (hereafter "Christian Tradition")

Like the Justice party, the Dravida Kazhagam also rose in the context of the dominance of Brahmins in Madras Presidency.[85]. At first Periyar was in the Congress. As a Congress leader, he was so committed to the cause of national independence that he participated in the non-co-operation movement with dedication and zeal.[86] Periyar participated in the Vaikom satyagraha and fought for the opening of temples to Harijans and thus earned the title "Vaikom hero"[87] Periyar was also committed to the cause of liberation of the Dravidians and other untouchables from the control of the Brahmins. He came to oppose religion in general and Brahminical Hinduism in particular.[88] He was opposed to casteism, and was convinced that casteism and Hinduism were one and the same.

Periyar left the Congress in 1925. It seems he demanded a fixed quota of seats for the non-Brahmins, both in the Congress Provincial Committee and in the Cabinet at the Congress Provincial Committee which met in 1925. When this demand was turned down he departed from the Congress.[89] In 1925 soon after his exit from the Congress Periyar started the Self-Respect Movement.[90] The ideology of the Self-Respect Movement had a cultural con-

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85. P.D. Devanandan, *The Dravida Kazhagam,* Bangalore, CISRS Pamphlets, 1960, p. 3. (hereafter *Dravida Kazhagam*) See also: Diehl, *Periyar, op.cit.,* p.9

86. Diehl, *Periyar, loc. cit.,* p. 8. See also: Lawrence, "Christian Tradition", *op.cit.,* p.47

87. Devanandan, *Dravida Kazhagam, loc.cit.,* p.6. See also: Barnett *The Politics, op. cit., p. 36.* R.L. Hardgrave, *The Dravidian Movement,* Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1965, p. 25.

88. D. Victor Sadhanandam, "A Study of the History of Dravida Kazhagam Movement and its religious influence in South India", (BD Thesis — unpublished), UTC Library, Bangalore, 1955, p. 14. See also: E.V. Ramaswamy, *Maranasana,* Trichy, Periyar Suya Mariyathai Prachara Niruvana Veliyeedu, 1974, p. 11., (hereafter *Marasasanam*), Diehl, *Periyar, loc. cit.,* p. 13.

89. Diehl, *Periyar, op.cit.,* p. 10, Lawrence quotes Dr. A.E. Inbanathan papers (which the author could not obtain)

90. Devanandan, *Dravida Kazhagam, op.cit.,* p. 5. cf: Saraswathi, *Minorities, op. cit.,* p. 97.

notation which ran counter to Brahminical Hinduism. Periyar protested against the accident of birth as the one and only criterion of personal worth;[91] seeking a basic change in the traditional social system, Periyar wanted a new system of values in which all people irrespective of caste or creed could enjoy equal self- respect.[92] Periyar claimed that the Self-Respect Movement's basic aim was promotion of rational thinking, the basis for self- respect and self-confidence, without which social and political freedom would be meaningless.[93] The first conference of the Movement was held in 1929 at Chingleput, and passed resolutions boycotting brahmin priests, condemning the Varnashrama Dharma, advocating removal of suffixes of names having caste connotations, promoting an easy termination of marriage, calling for the eradication of caste and untouchability, etc.[94] The second Self-Respect Movement Conference was held at Erode in 1930 and the third at Virudhunagar. in 1931.[95] As a result of these conferences, self-respect marriages became popular, and anti- caste propaganda gained momentum. Diehl sums up the cause for which Periyar fought thus:

> ... Anti-Brahminism is the principal motive and foundation of Periyar's message—The second dominant principle in Periyar's message was his anti-caste feelings. Periyar pleaded for the eradication of caste system and for social uplift.[96]

In his anti-Brahmin propaganda, Periyar repeatedly emphasised that the Socio-economic degradation of the Sudras, which term

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91. Rao, "Backward Classes Movement", *op.cit.* p. 246-47.
92. E.V. Ramaswamy, *Suya Mariyathai Iyakkathai Thorttuvithathen* Trichy, Periyar Suyamariyathai prachara Niruvana Veliyeedu 1975, p. 10-11. See also: Rao, *loc. cit.*, p. 247.
93. E.V. Ramaswamy, "Viduthalai", Thanthai Periyar 87th Birthday Anniversary Vizha Malar, 1965, p. 17, 70-71. See also: Saraswathi, *Minorities, loc. cit.*, p. 97-98.
94. Devanandan, *Dravida Kazhagam, op. cit.*,p. 8 cf: Rao, "Backward Classes Movement", *op.cit.*, p. 248.
95. S. Lakshmirathan Bharati, *History and Growth of Rationalist Movement in Tamil Nadu,* Madras, Sundara Printers, 1974, p.8-9.
96. Diehl *Periyar, op.cit.* p. 26.

meant for him all non-Brahmin caste groups, was the result of Brahmin domination and exploitation. Out of the more general theme of anti casteism in Periyar's propaganda, three concrete lines of action emerged: 1) the abolition of untouchability, leading to the Temple Entry Act; 2) the admission of Harijans to the priesthood; 3) The claim of communal representation, an outcome of the fight for full rights in all aspects of social life for depressed and backward classes.[97]

Thus, Periyar not only fought against the dominance of Brahmins, but also against untouchability and caste which bound the Dalits in age-old tyranny. He gave the lower and middle classes a sense of social awareness and self-respect and thereby contributed to the improvement of their living conditions.[98]

g) The Government and the Dalits

What the British Government did for the Dalits upto 1919 is difficult to summarize. Rao's observation is helpful in determining the attitude of the British Government. He says:

> ... During the latter half of the nineteenth century .. the British administration took interest in the amelioration of the depressed classes-mostly consisting of the untouchables-in regard to their education, employment and political representation:[99]

From 1919 onwards, one could say that the Government was actively involved with the Dalits. At first mainly lip service was paid to the depressed classes, especially during the period of dyarchy, but as time went on the Government showed some active interest in the depressed classes, and this interest manifested itself in many ways. Legislation was one means through which the Government (both imperial and provincial) attempted to do some-

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97. E. Ramaswamy, *Maranasasanam, op.cit.*, p. 11. See also: Diehl, *Periyar op. cit.*, p. 51.
98. Diehl, *loc.cit.*, p. 93
99. Rao, "Backward Classes Movement", *Some Aspects, op. cit.*, p. 232.

thing for the depressed classes. Offering educational concessions, fee-remissions and scholarships, and providing employment opportunities in public services, were the other measures through which the Government attempted to do justice to the depressed classes.

1) Legislative: The Madras Government had started the practice of nominating members to the Legislative Council to represent particular castes even before the India Act of 1919 set apart ten seats for nomination of members to represent the depressed classes. In 1919 M.C. Raja was nominated to represent the Adi-Dravidas.[100] Since 1919 the number of castes competing for seats far exceeded the number of seats provided. Hence the depressed classes had to take their chances in turns.[101]

During the period of dyarchy (1920-35), the Madras Legislative Council consisted mostly of forward non-Brahmins bearing caste titles. Mudaliar, Chettiar and Pillai. As pointed out above, the Justice party, which ruled Madras province from 1920 till 1935 (with a four year break) was more interested in the welfare of the higher caste non-Brahmins. Only when the Depressed Classes or the Dalit Movement gained momentum in late '30s and early '40s the Madras provincial Government realized that it should do something to remove the disabilities faced by the Dalits. Although the Justice party Government was committed to the cause of higher caste non-Brahmins, it did, however, create in 1920 what came to be known as the Labour Department, to work for the Welfare of the Dalits. The Justice party Government claimed credit for itself by saying that it was due to its efforts that the Labour Department was instituted.[102]

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100. Saraswathi; *Minorities, op.cit.,* p. 114-115

101. G.O.Nos: 777, pub (Services) June 27, 1930.
719, pub (Services) July 2, 1931.

102. *Swadesamitran,* Jan 1, 1926- Quoted Raja of Panagal's address at the All India Non-Brahmin Congress.

In 1932, Dr. P. Subbarayan, the Chief Minister of Madras, introduced a resolution in the Legislative Council on the right of the untouchables to enter Hindu temples. Many members supported the resolution which was considered in essence a means to rectify an injustice of the past and a move to lift the untouchables to a status of social equality with caste Hindus. 56 voted for the resolution and 19 remained neutral.[103] Apparently the Government of India regarded the issue in administrative terms and wishing to avoid trouble consequently opposed the very progressive measure that came from Madras. The Governor-General refused assent to Dr. Subbarayan's Bill passed by the Madras Legislative Council.[104] In this controversy over temple-entry, political considerations were more important than questions of religious orthodoxy. The temple entry was a question that agitated the minds of Congress leaders, who wished to conciliate the Dalits and thus prevent their secession from Hinduism which would reduce the electoral strength of the Congress. The political object of temple-entry agitation was to establish that the untouchables too were Hindus and thus prevent mass conversion to other religions reducing the number of Hindus.[105] At the same time, it was an attempt by the Congress to forge an alliance with the minority group suffering inferior social status by promises of equality which would prove fruitful in electoral politics and demonstrate to the foreign rulers the essential integrity of the nation.[106]

In 1938, the Madras Legislature passed the first comprehensive and Penal Act to remove social disabilities, making it an offense to discriminate against untouchables, not only in regard to publicly supported facilities such as roads, wells and transportation, but also in regard to any other secular institution to which the general public

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103. G.O.No:114, Public (General) March 31, 1933.
104. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op. cit.*, p. 169
105. *Ibid.*, p. 170
106. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p. 170

was admitted including restaurants, hotels, shops, etc.[107] In 1938, for the first time in British India, Government intervened to secure the opening of temples. The Madras Government passed temple entry Acts in 1938 with a view to protecting trustees of the temples and the excluded groups.

Thus, it was not till the end of our period that the Government began to legislate and intervene on behalf of the depressed classes or the Dalits. Such measures came late.

2. Labour Department:

On March 16, 1916 a resolution was moved recommending to the Government that:

> ... measures be devised with the help, if necessary, of a small representative committee of officials and non-officials for amelioration in the moral, material and educational conditions of what.... are known as the depressed classes and that as a preliminary step, the local Government and administrations should be invited to formulate schemes with due regard to local conditions.[108]

This motion was moved in the Imperial Assembly but it was not passed, as the Government of India took up the matter and enquired from provincial Governments as to what had been done and what further could be done for the depressed classes or the Dalits.

While the Madras Government was conducting an investigation of the economic condition of the Dalits, the Board of Revenue recommended the appointment of a special agency for the promotion of the interest of the Dalits. It suggested that a special officer with a suitable staff under him should be appointed as protector of the Dalits. The Government agreed with this proposal and sanctioned

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107. Mare Galanter, "Untouchability and the Law," *Contemporary India, op.cit.*, p. 239.

108. G.O. No: 1675, 1676, Home (Miscell) Dec. 2, 1919. See also: *ISR*, May 28, 1916 (UTC Vol. 26) p. 465.

the appointment of a special officer for the work and specified certain aboriginal and hill tribes and untouchables castes as falling within the scope of the duties of the special officer.[109] Aboriginal hill tribes such as Khonds, Savaras, Panos, Yanadis, Koyas, Yerukalas, Lambadis, Chenchus, Sugalis, Malayalis, Javadi, Irulars, Malasans, Shalagars, Kurumbars, Panis, Pulayans, Karis, Badagas, Todas and untouchables such as Adi—Dravidas, Chakkaliyans, Cherumans, Holeyans, Madigas, Malas, Pallans, Parayans, Semmans, Haddis, Bavuris, Dandasis, Madaris, Valluvans, Nayadis and Koragos came under the special care of the Labour Commissioner.[110]

The functions of the special officer, who was called Labour Commissioner, were to study the economic condition of these depressed classes or the Dalits and submit proposals to the Government for improving, to see that philanthropic bodies working in the field received such help from the Government as they required, and to promote education and also the standard of living of these classes by allotting lands for cultivation, sites for building houses and providing better water supply. Thus, C.F. Paddison, I.C.S., was appointed as the first Labour Commissioner. A Labour Advisory Board composed of one European, one Brahmin and one Adi Dravida was constituted in the same year. Gilbert Slater, K. Rangachariar and M.C. Raja were members of the first committee.[111] District Labour Officers were also appointed in the succeeding years. The Labour department grew fast in size[112] By 1931, the Labour Department covered 15 districts. Thus, the Labour Department of the Government of Madras came into being and expanded for the uplift of the Dalits.

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109. Yeatts, *Census of India 1931, op.cit.*, p. 343. See also: G.O. Nos: 1703, Law (Edn), 1926/3.9.1926 1648, PW &L (1928)/5.7.1928
110. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p. 156
111. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p.157
112. G.O. No: 334, PW & L (1927) Dept. 15.2.1927.

Promotion of elementary education was a primary concern of the Labour department which started separate primary schools for the Dalits called "Labour Schools". It was also the policy of the Labour department to assist Dalit pupils to get admission to public schools. Measures were taken and orders issued to ensure that schools aided or supported by public resources were really accessible to all classes of people. Local bodies were warned that subsidies paid on behalf of schools under their management would be withdrawn if they were situated in places inaccessible to the Dalits.[113]

The Labour department was active in many districts, but it could make no substantial progress towards achieving castelessness in educational institutions. In the 1930's, the department schools were transferred to the local authorities who were able and willing to take them over. The Government undertook to share the partial financial burden cast on the local bodies by this transfer of all labour schools.[114] Besides instituting separate schools, the labour department, as an inducement to the poorer sections of the Dalits to keep their children at school, undertook to supply books and other requisites upto a certain limit, and even clothes to deserving pupils.[115] Poor students of the depressed classes were exempt from payment of examination fees.[116] In 1924, M.C. Raja and in 1931 five other members in the Legislative Council recommended to the

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113. *Harijan*, July 6, 1935, p. 161.

114. G.O. No: 2283, PW & L, Oct.20, 1933.

115. G.O. Nos: 918, PW & L, 1930/20.3.1930.
178, PW & L, 1931/21.1.1931.

116. G.O. No: 2396, PW & L, 1927/20.10.1927. See also: G.O. 75, Law (Edn) 1932/18.1.1932, p. 17-reads
"... In the Education Department concessions to pupils belonging to the depressed classes take the form of (1) half-fee concessions under Rule 92 of the MER; (2) higher rate of stipends to teachers undergoing training; (3) Exemption from payment of fee for the SSLC examination; (4) special scholarships and fee remissions."

Government that Midday meals be supplied for pupils in Labour schools.[117]

3. Employment opportunities:

In 1932, the Government had raised the upper age limit from twenty five to twenty seven for backward classes and Muslims in respect of appointments to the posts of clerks and typists.[118] This waiving of age limit by one or two years confined in the beginning to subordinate positions in Government employment was extended in 1936 to the State Medical Service raising the age limit for Scheduled Castes and fixing it as thirty five while the general rule prescribed thirty years for others.[119] This age concession originally limited in operation for a period of four years was extended for another period of three years in 1936 and again at the end of that period for one more year.[120] Similar to the age concession was mark concession introduced in 1932. This concession, too, originally limited to a period of four years was later on extended. Besides these concessions, the Government exempted the Backward Classes from payment of application fees prescribed for jobs.[121] In 1935, under the Government of India act a list of depressed classes, on the basis of untouchability term "Scheduled castes", was drawn for electoral purposes. Since then, the scheduled castes alone became eligible to take turns reserved for the depressed classes in the public services.[122] Apart from these concessions, the Government also

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117. G. O. No: 748, Law (Edn) 1925/12.5.1925 This G.O. contains M.C.Raja's proposal. See also: G.O. No: 1068, PW & L, 1929/27.3.1929 *and* G.O. No. 581, Law (Edn.) 1931/11.4.1931 Council Resolution read: "This Council recommends to the Government that all the poor children of the depressed classes attending the elementary classes in all the Government and aided schools throughout the Presidency be provided with midday meals."
118. G.O.No: 849, Development Department 1939/1.4.1939
119. G.O.No: 1077, pub (Services) 1936/15.6.1936
120. G.O.No: 754, 755, 756, pub (Services) 1937/21.4.1937. See also: G.O.No: 1249, pub (Services), 1938/20.7.1938.
121. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.* p.176
122. G.O.No. 1949, pub (Services) 1938/6.12.1938.

through Labour Department allotted house sites for depressed classes. However, the success of this scheme was questioned.[123]

4. The Dalit Response to the Government's ameliorative steps:

Through legislation, by extending educational concessions, fee remissions and scholarships and by waiving the age of depressed classes for public services, and by other means such as allotment of house sites etc, the Madras Presidency Government attempted to ameliorate the condition of the depressed classes. But, what was the attitude of the depressed classes to all these remedial measures undertaken by the Government? Were they satisfied with what was meted out to them? Did they claim for more concessions or opportunities? In other words, from the point of view of at least the articulate representatives of the Depressed Classes, were these measures considered adequate?

About 1920 when the non-Brahmin movement became vigorous and after the Justice party Government was installed in the Madras Presidency, the Depressed Classes welcomed the non-Brahmin Movement as a movement for democratic liberation. But later they began to feel that their condition had not improved at all while high caste non-Brahmins replaced Brahmins in power and position. They were aggrieved that non-Brahmin rule was not promoting their interests.[124] The abolition of the Labour Department for sometime in 1921 and P.Thiagaraja Chettiar's refusal to support anti-untouchability laws in 1922 were adduced as proofs that non-Brahmin rule would not protect the interests of the Dalits. At a conference in Tirunelvelli, a pertinent question was asked: "The Brahmin was driven away to make room for the Chetty, the Naidu, the Reddi and the Pillai. What about the millions of the depressed classes?"[125] In 1923, M.C.Raja complained that Justice party Government had not initiated house building schemes, given

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123. *Sudarsini,* June 15, 1926.

124. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.,* p. 117-118.

125. *The Hindu,* June 28, 1923.

the Adi Dravidas economic help, developed free education, instituted land distribution and reform, and visited Adi-dravida villages to hear their grievances.[126]

During the period of Dyarchy between 1920 and 1935, the Madras Legislative Council consisted mostly of forward non-Brahmins such as Pillais, Mudaliars and Reddis.[127] The constitutional recognition and the administrative concessions granted to the non-Brahmins since 1920 benefited only higher caste non-Brahmins. Thus, the depressed classes contention was legitimate that their interests were not served by the Justice party Government. Andhra Patrika wrote in 1925:

> ... The system adopted by the Labour department in the matter of granting house-sites to the depressed classes does not at all appear to be satisfactory. Though the depressed classes have been allowed representation in the local bodies, it has become an ordinary thing to nominate others in their places.. It is meaningless to argue that no suitable representatives are available among the depressed classes.. The time has come now when the love for the depressed classes should take a practical shape.[128]

However, the Justice party Government claimed that it was all for the depressed classes and that it was due to its efforts that the Labour Department was instituted.[129] Apart from creating the Labour Department, the Justice party Government did not seem to have done much for the depressed classes. Even in 1928, the depressed classes community expressed its discontent and dissatisfaction towards the services and opportunities offered by the Labour Commissioner.[130] Many more instances could be cited to show

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126. *Andhra Patrika*, Madras, 10th Jan, 1926
127. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p. 118
128. *Andhra Patrika*, Madras, 22 Oct., 1925.
129. *Swadesamitran*, Madras, Jan 1, 1926.
130. G.O.No: 1031, PW & L (1928)/11.4.1928. Legislative question raised by Swami A.S. Sahajanandam.

that the depressed classes were not content with what they were receiving from the Government.[131]

With the prospect of further advancement towards self-Government appearing brighter by 1930, the leaders of the depressed classes felt the need to define their political policy. Depressed Classes leaders repeated in conferences that in the interests of the depressed classes, the British Government should not part with power because Congress Raj would crush the Adi-Dravidas.[132] Thus, the ameliorative measures of the Government did not fully satisfy the depressed classes, who continued to be dissatisfied with the discrimination.

5. Status of Converts from Dalit Communities:

While the depressed classes came under the purview of the Government, and in Madras, directly under the special care of the Labour Commissioner, the converts from Depressed Classes to Christianity were still facing economic and social disabilities. Dalit converts to Christianity in most cases found their material condition no better than that of many hindu castes, it was not easy for the Government to decide whether to treat them as depressed castes and include them as Christians as eligible to the special care of the Labour Department or to exclude them as Christians. In the beginning, the Government took a human rather than legalistic view of this issue, because it realized that there was a real difficulty in the case of Indian Christians who by their conversion had lost their claim to be untouchables, but were not free from economic and social disabilities.[133] The policy followed by the Labour Department was to include among the depressed classes, such of them as had become Christians also, and in 1925 the educational assistance

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131. 8th and 11th Conference resolutions reflected the attitude of the depressed classes towards Government ameliorative steps.

132. Saraswathi, *Minorities, op.cit.*, p. 171

133. G.O. No: 75, Law, (Edn) 1932/18.1.1932, p.6 reads: "... prior to 1926 the Labour Department made no distinction between Christian converts of the Depressed Classes origin and Hindu Depressed Classes in regard to its activities for the improvement of their condition..."

available to the Hindu depressed classes were extended to Christian converts among them.[134] In 1926, the Government decided that educational concessions to converts from the depressed classes should be operated by the Education department and the Labour Department was instructed in 1928 to confine the scholarship, which it distributed, to the Hindu Depressed Classes alone.[135] Thus, the Christian converts became "eligible community" for all ameliorative measures except education undertaken by the Labour Department. But in recruitment to the State services, Christian depressed classes had to take their chance along with other christians and not with the depressed classes.[136] On account of this discrimination, the minority within the minority complained that even after conversion to Christianity they were subject to the same social disabilities as before. Christian depressed classes throughout insisted that they were as depressed as the non-Christians.[137]

The Government of India Act of 1935 decreed that "... no Indian Christian shall be deemed to be a member of a scheduled caste"[138] Thus, converts to Christianity from depressed classes were discriminated against. In this whole process, the argument was that converts to Christianity ceased to be members of the depressed classes.[139]

Therefore, the *NCC Review* argued,

> ... we cannot ignore the fact that Christian converts from these classes cannot suddenly outgrow the terrible economic and social disabilities to which they have been subjected for generations. It has been urged by Missions that so long as Christians share these disabilities along with other depressed

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134. Saraswathi: *Minorities, op.cit.*, p.164.
135. G.O.No: 1648 PW & L, 1928/5.7.1928.
117; Law (Gen) 1926/12.1.1926.
136. *Ibid.*
137. G.O.Nos: 1648, PW & L, 1928/5.7.1928/117, Law (Gen) 1926/12.1.1926
117, Law (Gen) 1926, 12.1.1926
138. Saraswathi; *Minorities, op. cit.*, p. 164
139. *ISR*, May 9th, 1936, p. 562-563.

> classes the state should not discriminate against them in the help given from public funds for their improvement and uplift.[140]

Thus, Government, in a limited way, in the beginning and after 1935, to some extent, was able to do something for the Dalits. But the Dalit converts had to suffer because of the discriminating policy of the Government, and to their aid, the Christians had to come. Christian Missions, since the latter part of the 19th century were involved with the depressed classes or the Dalits. But in the 20th century, they had to work, in particular, for the uplift and improvement of the Dalit converts who were denied major Governmental concessions, and at the same time work in general for the welfare of the Dalits.[141]

h) Christian Missions and the Dalits:

Among the agencies which were involved with the Dalits, the Christian church was one which made one of the greatest contributions to their improvement and uplift. Other agencies worked for or on behalf of the Dalits, in a limited way, with their own vested interests and philosophies. The Christian Church, too, had a vested interest in working among the Dalits and that was to evangelize them. But this word 'evangelize' should not be understood in the way it is ordinarily understood. This term is a comprehensive term and connotes much more than an attempt to convert people. The Christian Church, in its involvement with the Dalits, became a movement of the Dalits. The image and anguish of the Dalits, in this process of interaction between Christian churches and the depressed classes, became the image and anguish of the church.[142] The Church took upon itself the hopes and aspirations of the down trodden and the Dalits and endeavoured to uplift them.

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140. *Ibid.*, See also : "The cry of untouchables," (Editorial) *NCC Review,* June 1936, p. 286.

141. Godfrey E. Phillips, *Doing and Dreams,* London, The Livingstone Press, 1926, p. 122 (hereafter Phillips, *Doings and Dreams*)

142. G.E. Phillips, *The Outcastes' Hope.* London, Young Peoples' Missionary Movement, 1912, Preface, pV. (hereafter *Outcastes' Hope*).

The first step in the Christian Church's involvement with the Dalits began with the mass conversion of the latter to Christianity in the latter half of 19th century.[143] The Dalits did this because they thought conversion would be good for them. As we pointed out above, the primary motive the first converts had in mind was not economic benefit but social and psychological benefits. They wanted a chance to move up by moving out of the caste system, and a new sense of their own worth, dignity and self-respect which came along with conversion.[144] What did the Christian Church do to ameliorate the condition of the Dalits? This is a big question, and we shall try to answer it with special reference to the area in which the London Missionary Society worked, that is, Coimbatore, Salem, Attur and Erode in the Madras Presidency. Before we go into the details we shall summarize the nature of the Christian Church's involvement with the Dalits, and the reason for their involvement.

"... Mass Conversion", the 14 Indian Christians' Manifesto pointed out,

> From the point of view of the Depressed and Backward Classes, were in the past mainly the outcome of the desire for social justice and all-round uplift, and the Christian Church has succeeded in helping large sections of converts from these communities to a higher standard of life-social, economic, moral and spiritual — and to real transformation in the life and character of individuals and groups belonging to these classes.[145]

G.K. Devadhar observed early in 1910: "Among the private bodies the missionaries were of course the first to do the pioneering

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143. Webster, "Theological Construction", *op. cit.*, p.4

144. John C.B. Webster, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India,* Delhi Macmillan, 1976, p. 60-64. cf., Oddie, "Christian Conversion", *op. cit.*, p. 61-79

145. M.K.Gandhi, *Christian Missions,* Ahmedabad, Navajivan Press, 1941, p. 135. See also: *Harijan, 3.4.1937*

work (among the depressed classes) and their operations are spread all over the country."[146]

The Indian Social Reformer in 1916 remarked: "... Before the Christian Missionaries took up the work of uplifting them, no one moved his little finger to help these people."[147] These observations demonstrate that the service of the Christian Church to the Dalits was generally recognized at the beginning of our period. The Christian Church worked for awakening among the Dalits. Through education, co-operative credit societies, farm settlements or colonies, the Christian Church tried to ameliorate their condition. The church also appealed to the Government on behalf of the Dalits and got them many concessions and privileges.[148]

Right from the beginning, the Christian Church was interested in the depressed classes, as most of the converts came from them. But the questions remain: why were the Christian Missions interested in the Dalits? Why did they go to the lowcastes before the Mass Movement phase? and, why did the Dalits come to the Christian Church during and even after the mass movement phase? was there an ideology which prompted the Christian Missionaries to go to and work among the Dalits? These questions need to be answered. One cannot simply say that Christian Missions were interested in the Dalits. That statement, of course, is a fact, but that must be explained. And with regard to Dalits going to the Christian Missions for conversion also, one cannot simply say that they were attracted by the religion of the Missionaries. Again, this statement also is a fact, but that too needs to be explained. How could one explain the involvement of the Christian Church with the Dalits? To find out the answer, one needs to go to the theological and ideological foundations of the Missionary Movement.

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146. *ISR*, Jan 22, 1910, p. 245.

147. *ISR*, Editorial, March 26, 1916, p. 351.

148. M.S.A. Rao, "Backward Classes Movement", *Some Aspects, op.cit.*, p. 235. See also: G.O. 75, Law (Edn) 1932/18.1.1932 — which has reference to the representation made by Bishop J.H. Maclean and Rev. G. Mathews on behalf of the depressed classes Christians.

Oddie in his book, *Social Protest in India,* points out that Missionaries were concerned about the deplorable conditions within India which made the task of spreading Christianity difficult, and that they were also moved by ordinary humanitarian considerations.[149]

True, the Christian Missionaries had humanitarian reactions and were concerned about the conditions in India when they came. But this does not explain much. Ingham says that Christian Missionaries were involved with the Dalits because, "their religion had given them a feeling of urgency."[150] These authors give only a part of the answer or they do not fully explain the ideology behind Missionaries involvement with the Dalits.

Part of the answer must surely lie in their background. James Alter notes that many of the early 19th century Missionaries came to India with a heritage of social activism, particularly in the struggle for liberty.[151] He goes on:

> Their forefathers had fought for religious and Civil liberty and they themselves had taken part in campaigns to abolish the slave trade and to emancipate Negro slaves. They conceived of the Missionary Movement as a great liberting force, called into being by God to rescue man and woman through the power of the Gospel from sin, ignorance, false religion and oppressive social customs and practices. Their chief object in India was evangelism, but they combined with this a zeal to reform and regenerate Indian society.[152]

He also points out that the biblical and revolutionary principles of liberty, equality and fraternity were of fundamental importance to the British and American Protestant Missionary Movement.[153] The Missionaries, coming from a revolutionary background, a background in which they had conceived missionary movement as

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149. G.A. Oddie, *Social Protest in India,* New Delhi, Manohar, 1979, p. 246-247 (hereafter *Social Protest*)

150. Kenneth Ingham, *Reformers in India 1793-1833, U.K., Cambridge University Press, 1956, p. 47. (hereafter Reformers in India*)

a liberating force, saw the oppressive conditions of the Dalits and therefore they were interested in them. Max Warren says:

> The Missionary Movement ... was in part an expression of a far wider development— the social emancipation of the under-privileged classes. This development owed its inspiration to influences as diverse as the Evangelical revival, the Industrial Revolution, and the Social upheavals across the channel in France.[154]

In other words, Warren points out that the Christian Missionary Movement was influenced by the evangelical revival, Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. Thus the background of the Missionary movement was such that Missionaries, when they came to India, were predisposed to interest themselves in the Dalits. Thus while all missionaries came with a zeal to convert the "heathen", they also involved themselves with the attempts to improve the condition of the down-trodden and the under-dog namely, the Dalits.

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151. James P. Alter, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (Themes in Anglo-Saxon Protestant Missions and the Church in Northern India 1800-1914). (*Indian Church History Review,* vol. VIII, June 1974, p. 38 (hereafter "Protestant Missions")

152. Alter, "Protestant Missions," *op.cit.*, p. 38.

153. *Ibid.*

154. Max Warren, *Social History and Christian Missions,* Great Britain, SCM Press Ltd., 1967, p. 37. cf. Nirade K. Barooah, *David Scott in North East* India, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1970, p. 178-9, who says: "The ideas of those Evangelicals ... their basic concept was that the character of man was a product, not of his physical, but of his moral environment, and that salvation could be achieved and the individual could be totally transformed by a direct assault on the mind... their logical conclusion was that for India to progress, her people must undergo a similar liberation, an assimilation on the deepest level." and Eric Stokes, *The English* Utilitarians *and India,* Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 30 reads: "...(Evangelicals believed) in intense individualism and exaltation of individual conscience, its belief that human character could be suddenly and totally transformed by a direct assault on the mind, and finally, its conviction that this required an educative process—"

In the Missionary Movement we see a combination of ideology and theology. The theology of the Missionaries also led to their involvement with the Dalits. They saw gospel as something intended for the whole of man-body and mind as well as soul.[155] They believed that God is interested in the human beings. He is concerned about their worth and wholeness whatever their condition may be. As children of God, all men and women are equal in His sight. With one God as Father, all men and Women are brothers and sisters and co-equals. Hence, wherever man's worth is not recognized, wherever his equality and brotherhood is denied, there conversion should take place. Conversion, here, does not mean converting. God's love and His concern for the lowest of the lowly should be established here and now.[156] This seems to have been the theological understanding of the Missionaries who came to India. The Evangelical Missionaries of the 19th-20th centuries, for instance considered caste incompatible with Christianity.[157] The Bible says that all are equal in the sight of God and that the church is the true union of believers.[158] Caste, in their view, cut at the roots of brotherly love and militated against the true union in the church. Secondly, caste sustained "hopeless slavery."[159] Hence the Christian Missionaries of this period strongly opposed Caste. Their fight against Sati, nautch dances, opium traffic and such other social evils was also based upon this theology.[160] Oddie's observation with reference to the

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155. Oddie, *Social Protest, op.cit.*, p. 27

156. P.O. Phillip, *The Depressed Classes and Christianity,* Madras, CLS, 1925, p.3. reads: "... It is the over mastering sense of the love of God, having as its objective the bringing of all men and women into the fellowship of love and brotherhood as revealed by Jesus Christ, that has impelled Christian Missionaries to go to the ends of the earth and preach the gospel." See also: Oddie, *Social Protest, loc. cit.*, p. 32

157. Oddie, *Social protest, op.cit.*, p. 27

158. Galatians, 3:28-29.
Ephesians, 2:19-22.

159. Oddie, *loc. cit.*, p.66. See also: Ingham, *Reformers in India* op.cit., p. 23.

160. Oddie's *Social Protest in India* describes this consideration in detail.

Missionaries' concern for the pariah in Madras is applicable to much Christian Missionary activity for the welfare of the Dalits.

He observes:

> The idea of expressing God's concern for the whole of man and of embodying the spirit of the Gospel in humanitarian and social reform activity was reflected especially in discussion of the outcastes or pariah.[161]

Thus, Christian Missions and the Christian Church were interested in the Dalits because they were concerned about sharing the love of God, which meant acceptance of the worth of the individual and establishing equality and brotherhood among all. Christian Missionaries came with this theological base and this theology was operative in their involvement with the Dalits. Secondly, the Modern Missionary Movement was born out of "influences as diverse as the Evangelical revival, the Industrial Revolution, and the Social upheavals across the channel in France." Having seen the underdog during and after the Industrial Revolution, the exploitation and oppression of the common man in France before French Revolution, and acquiring the three ideals that emerged from it, it is no wonder that Christian Missionaries were concerned about, interested in and had a deep sympathy for the Dalits. When they came into the oppressive Indian context wherein they found the Dalits oppressed, denied of equality, of brotherhood, of rights and privileges, of status, of individuality, it was inevitable that they should turn their attention to those people. Thus, we see the combined operation of theology and ideology in the Christian churches' involvement with the Dalits. This is true of most Protestant Missionaries and particularly of those associated with the London Missionary Society, with whom we are primarily concerned in the pages that follow.

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161. Oddie, *Social Protest, op. cit.*, p. 34

CHAPTER IV

LONDON MISSION SOCIETY WORK IN SALEM, ATTUR, COIMBATORE AND ERODE AREAS

1. LMS Tamil Field, a brief historical description:

The London Mission Society worked in Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode areas. The area covered by Mission work in these places was called the Tamil Field. LMS work in the Tamil Field covered an area of about 120 miles long by 50 miles broad, and stretched from North and East of salem through Erode to Coimbatore in the South-West at the foot of the Nilgiris.[1] Hence, our study about LMS work in the Tamil Field covers Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode areas only.

LMS began its work in the Tamil Field first at Salem in 1827.[2] Missionaries like Lechler, W.J. Hatch, T.C. Whitney and others worked in this area. While Lechler worked in the 19th Century, Hatch and Whitney were missionaries at Salem during the period in which we are interested. Mission work at Attur began as an extension of the Salem Mission work and therefore, Mission Reports do not speak about Attur as a Mission Head Station. However, it was a Head Station. The work among Kuravars was a special work done by the LMS Christians and this was done only at Attur and Salem and therefore Attur was treated as an area in so far as the work that concerned Kuravars. Mission work at Coimbatore began in the year 1830.[3] The Mission work at Erode began in the year 1840. This again was an extension of Coimbatore Mission

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1. *Report of the Deputation to India, 1922-1923*, London, LMS, 1923, p.25 (Hereafter cited as *Deputation Report 1923*).
2. T.C. Whitney, *A Hundred Years of Salem Mission History*, Nagercoil, London Mission Press, 1936, p.1. (Hereafter cited as *Hundred Years*). See also, *Mission Report*, 1919 p.91.
3. Mission Report, 1919, p. 91

work.[4] Erode became a Residential Head Station only in 1920, with the arrival of Anthony. W. Brough, a Missionary well-remembered since.[5] Erode was the only Mass Movement area in the whole Tamil Field, although there were group conversions on a smaller scale in Salem, Attur and Coimbatore areas.

The preceding two paragraphs were necessary in order to identify the London Mission work in the Tamil field. This study is interested more in the work of the LMS Christians for the Dalits, and therefore it is assumed that this brief historical outline is sufficient.

2. LMS related Christians in the Tamil Field

To establish among which Community or Communities the LMS worked in the Tamil Field is important for our study. All that Goodall, LMS India Foreign Secretary, referring to Tamil Field said was:

> Numerically by far the greater portion of the Christian Community within the Society's areas was drawn from the outcastes... As in all the other Mass movement areas, this situation was characteristic of a rural rather than urban population and the communities involved were Depressed classes.[6]

But Goodall does not specify how he acquired this information. His account, no doubt, is authentic, for he served as India Foreign

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4. Ibid, 1900, p. 160.
5. Ibid, 1934, p 47. Late Mrs. Jessie Isaac, St. George's Cathedral, Madras, was interviewed for the Erode area. She was born and brought up there. She studied at Salem Girl's School and later worked as teacher at Erode. Mr. A.T. Balraj, formerly Principal of the Bishop Cotton Boys School, Bangalore, is her youngest brother. He was also interviewed for the Erode and Salem areas (hereafter cited as Jessie Isaac and Balraj respectively).
6. Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Mission Society, 1895-1945,* London, Oxford University Press, 1954, p.21 & 73. (hereafter cited as Goodall, *A History)*

Secretary of the LMS and visited India in 1939.[7] He could have secured this information either from reports sent by Missionaries in the Tamil Field and during his visit he could have seen the converts. Thus, LMS Christians in the Tamil Field came from the depressed classes or the Dalit Communities. But Goodall leaves out certain important historical details. How did such depressed classes or Dalit communities come into the LMS fold? How did this "coming in" start? What was the condition of those Dalits who came in? Were all the four areas Mass Movement areas? What communities or castes among the Dalits became Christian? While Goodall did not find it necessary to raise such questions, it is important for us to attempt to do so here.

G.E. Phillips, like Goodall, who was also India Foreign Secretary, referring to LMS related Christians in the Tamil Field, said: "In both our Tamil and Telugu fields the Christian community is drawn largely from the outcastes who are educationally backward."[8] Phillips, too, leaves out historical details. Although both Goodall's and Phillips' accounts are valuable, they fail to provide answers to the questions that are relevant for the purposes of our study. Hence, we must look to other sources for the answers.

Who from the Dalit communities come into Christianity in the Tamil Field? or who were the LMS related Christians in the Tamil Field? Mission Reports from 1831 till 1851 which have references to converts simply say that people who converted were "heathen".[9] What the Mission Reports meant by this term is arguable; presumably it was a reference to converts from the depressed classes or Dalit communities. But then "heathen" could have meant, in the Mis-

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7. *Report by Rev. H. Leonard Hurst after a Secretarial visit to India,* July, 1946, London, LMS, 1947, p.7 (hereafter *Hurst, Secretarial Report).*

8. *Report by Rev. G.E. Phillips, M.A., after a Secretarial visit to India,* Sept. 1933-April 1934, London, LMS, 1934, p.58 (hereafter cited as Phillips, *Secretarial Report, 1934).* See also: G.E. Phillips, *The Ancient Church and Modern India,* London, Student Christian Movement, 1920, p. 110 (hereafter cited as *Ancient Church).* Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, op. cit.,* p.122.

9. For instance, *Mission Reports,* 1841, p.68 1843, p.69-70.

sionaries understanding, any one from another religion. Are there other evidences to show that converts in the Tamil Field came from the Dalit Communities? The Mission Report for 1844, for instance, says;

> Not only do the heathen of high caste look down with utter contempt on all those who embrace the gospel, and treat them as outcastes, but even the lowest grades of Hindus consider the followers of the Saviour beneath them in rank, and unworthy of their society,[10]

From this one could say that converts were panchamas or the Fifth Varuna,[11] or untouchables, if the lowest grades of Hindus looked down upon the converts.

Depressed Classes or the Dalits were considered as the last in the caste system. If the lowest grades of Hindus looked down upon converts, then most probably the latter had their origins in the depressed classes. The other expression used for the converts is that they came "from the ranks of idolatry".[12] But this could mean Hindus in general. The Report for 1852, for the first time, clearly states that women who studied in Mission Schools at Salem were derided as "pariahs who wear no jewels".[13] This is the first clear reference to converts who came form the Depressed Classes. In the 1882 Report, there is a clear reference to converts who came from pariah villages.[14] The Report for the year 1900 states that, ".. The low caste people, among whom in other places so many converts to Christianity have been won,are in a very depressed condition."[15] This Report is the first one to use the term "depressed" to describe the condition of the converts. It seems that the missionary terminology in the Reports coincided with the terminology

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10. *Mission Report*, 1844, p.70.
11. Means Caste.
12. *Mission Report, 1845*, p.81.
13. *Mission Report, 1852*, p.95.
14. *Mission Report*, 1882, (page torn in the original)
15. *Mission Report, 1900*, p.159

that was in use at that time. The term "Depressed Classes" came to be widely used only in the first decade of the 20th century. The use of terms for them such as "panchamas", "Adi-Dravida" was also common. The Report for 1900 uses the term panchamas to identify converts.[16] From this it becomes clear that converts to Christianity, in the Tamil Field, were Dalits or were mainly from the depressed classes. The Report for 1926 used the term Adi-Dravida, that was used to describe pariahs at that time. It said, "... the Adidravida... show a great readiness to receive christianity" (in the Salem area)[17] The Report for 1927 clearly stated converts to Christianity in the Tamil Field were from the depressed classes

> There are increasingly frequent indications that the efforts for the uplift of the depressed classes have made a deep impression upon the social strata above them, but the vast majority of baptisms are still from the depressed classes.[18]

Thus it is evident that converts to Christianity in the Tamil Field largely came from the depressed classes or Dalit Communities. There were other converts from among such groups as the Naidu, Valayars, Chetty and so on,[19] but they formed a small minority among the converts.

a) Converts in the Salem area

Is it correct to say that converts to Christianity were Dalits in all the four areas? The answer is almost certainly in the affirmative. For instance, Koneripet, in Salem area, largely consisted of pariahs and most of them came into Christianity as early as 1853, during the time of Lechler.[20] The Report for 1894 clearly shows that in the Salem area converts were largely Dalits. It says that, "... the pariahs and other law castes are greatly oppressed by caste people, and are now beginning to find out that their hope of social elevation

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16. *Mission Report, 1900,* p. 161
17. *Mission Report,* 1926, p.44
18. *Mission Report,* 1927, p.24
19. *Mission Reports,* 1924, p.35 1893, p.129 1889, p.85 1928, p.57.
20. *Mission Report,* 1853, p.94

is in Christianity... God appears to be using the oppressed condition of the people as a means of leading them to Christianity".[21] The Deputation of 1923 reported that the LMS Church at Salem "unites in its membership those from the silk weaving caste and others originally from the depressed classes".[22] The Salem church seems to have had silk weaving caste people in considerable number. But in other parts of Salem, for instance in Tiruchengodu Taluk, the converts were largely Dalits. The Report for 1933 said: "The movement among adi Dravida in the Tiruchengodu Taluk still continues, and another one hundred and thirty two baptisms took place last year."[23] The LMS had settlements for Kuravars at Salem and Kuravars belonged to the Depressed Classes. From all this, it is evident that converts in Salem area largely came from the Dalit Communities. In 1919 Salem had 384 Church members and 1,277 other adherents; In 1929 Church membership was 319, and adherents numbered 1,579; In 1939, there were 528 Church members and the number of adherents rose to 3,670.

b) Converts in Attur Area:

In the Attur area, converts to Christianity were mainly from the criminal tribe called Kuravars, of the Depressed Classes,[24] and also panchamas.[25]At Attur the LMS had settlements for Kuravars, and Boarding schools for Kurava boys and girls.[26] How many from the Kurava community came into Christianity at Attur is not clear.

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21. *Mission Report,* 1894, p.158
22. *Deputation Report, 1923,* p.215
23. *Mission Report,* 1933, p.48-49
24. G.O. Nos: 1427, Law (Edn) 1927, 18.7.1927 855, Law (Edn) 1925, 19.5.1925 2018, PW & L (1927) 12.9.1929, p.4. reads "... The Term 'depressed classes' comprises the following:
    1) Aboriginal and hill tribes.
    2) Criminal tribes;
    3) Untouchables.
    4) Fishermen..."
25. *Mission Report,* 1930, p.61.
26. *Ibid.,* p.60. cf: Phillips, *Secretarial Report,* p.66

But it appears most of the people in the settlements came under the influence of Christianity.[27] Apart from Kurava converts, there were converts from Panchamas[28] also.

c) Converts in Coimbatore area:

In Coimbatore town as in Salem town, there were not many converts from the depressed classes.

But in other parts of the Coimbatore area, converts largely came from the depressed classes. For instance, the Report for 1882 said:

> In two Pariah villages, in a part of the district called Perunduray, a number of people have in past years embraced Christianity, and from them the good influence is gradually spreading among relatives and friends.[30]

In 1919 there were 216 Church members and adherents totalled 2,412. In 1922, 40 people at Annur became Christians and they were from depressed classes.[31] In 1930 also a company of outcastes known as the "wearers of the green bangles" (a pariah sub-caste) became Christians.[32] In 1939, the Coimbatore area had 397 Church members and 2,412 adherents.[33]

d) Converts in Erode area

In the Erode area, most of the converts were Dalits. Erode was a Mass Movement area, a movement which began in 1898.[34] By 1919 the area had 408 church members and 7,013 adherents.[35]

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27. *Mission Reports,* 1929, p.59 1930, p.60
28. *Mission Reports,* 1930, p.61
29. *Mission Report,* 1882, p. unknown.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Mission Report,* 1922, p.11
32. *Mission Report,* 1930, p.64
33. *Mission Report,* 1939, p.80
34. *Mission Report,* 1921, p.23
35. *Mission Report,* 1919, p.91

The Report for 1921 stated that "Erode is the centre of a great Mass Movement with some 10,000 baptized adherents, outstripping all our means of supporting it."[36] In this area people who came from depressed classes were known as Conch Shell pariahs, green bangle pariahs and Chucklas.[37] In 1939, Erode had 967 Church members, and 13,323 adherents. Thus, converts in the Tamil Field largely came from the depressed classes.

In Salem and Coimbatore towns, conversion, either from caste or depressed castes, did not take place on a large scale, which means there were no mass movements.[38] But in those two areas, as well as at Attur, converts were mostly from the rural areas and they came in small groups. In Erode, converts came in on a large scale as that area happened to be a mass movement area. On the basis of this survey one can conclude that during our period the Tamil Field had about 20,000 converts from the depressed classes.[39]

e) Condition of the converts:

The converts who thus related themselves with LMS Churches were very poor and were in an oppressed condition.[40] They lived in agricultural villages.[41] Many of them were agricultural serfs; tied to the land of their masters.[42] Some were cobblers, and some like Kuravars, had thievery as their traditional way of life. However different their occupations were, these Dalits were all in a socially degraded, educationally ignorant, religiously superstitious, politically powerless, morally and culturally backward condition. They were virtual slaves, outcastes and they lived in a state in which they had no sense of self-respect or personhood. Such people only

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36. *Mission Report,* 1921, p.23
37. *Ibid., p.53. See also: Mission Report,* 1923, p.48
38. *Mission Reports,* 1928, p.56 reads: "... There has been no mass movement in the Salem district, though there have been signs that it was coming-"
39. *Mission Report,* 1939, p.80. See also: *Mission Report,* 1937, p.15.
40. *Mission Report,* 1845, p.81-82
41. *Mission Report,* 1865, p.81
42. *Mission Report,* 1900, p.159

the LMS Missionaries and local Christians served eversince the LMS commenced its work in the Tamil Field. The LMS Christians contributed to the movement of the Dalits in a large measure. They tried to uplift the Dalits in all walks of life, and thus undergirded their movement. Their effort to uplift the Dalits included various contributions. The LMS Christians helped the Dalits through Education, Medical Mission, Rural reconstruction etc. Among their contributions, the ideological contribution was especially the significant. The following pages deal with the ideological contribution of the LMS Christians to the Dalits.

3. LMS Christians and their Ideological Contribution to the Dalits:

Elsewhere in this study it was pointed out that Christian Missions to India came with certain theological and ideological convictions. That observation was made in the course of establishing the fact that Christian Missions, in general, came with a particular interest in the under-dog and hence, the Dalits. In this section, an attempt is made to trace the theological and ideological convictions of the LMS Christians, as they involved themselves with the Dalits in the Tamil Field. In this connection certain questions are raised: What were their theological and ideological convictions? Which of the LMS Christians expressed these convictions? How far did these convictions help the depressed classes? In what spheres of their activities, were these convictions fully operative? etc.

a) The LMS Christians' Ideology in the 19th Century:

In the beginning of 19th century, the LMS MIssionary Lechler, who worked at Salem, was interested in raising the Dalit Christians in the scale of society by teaching them carpentry and bricklaying. This way he thought he could give a severe blow to the system of caste.[43] This is the first obvious reference we are able to locate regarding LMS Christians' Ideology. LMS Missionaries found that

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43. *Mission Report,* 1848, p.79

it was the caste system that kept the Dalits at the bottom rung of the society and hence they wanted to strike at it and destroy it. Lechler was not the only LMS Christian who had this ideology. There were others too. In 1879 Rev. E.L. Robinson of the Coimbatore Mission, speaking for himself and his colleagues, wrote:

> It is supposed by some that it is only the poorest and the lowest of the people that we are able to reach... It is of the utmost importance on other grounds also, that the truth should be first received by the simple and the ignorant, and gradually win its way upwards, rather than that the opposite course should be followed. If Christianity were first of all to be adopted by the Brahmins, the certain result would be, that it would be mixed with many of the corrupt practices and evil doctrines of Hinduism.[44]

Thus the LMS Christians of the earlier period, mainly missionaries, were particular that the message of Christianity should reach the out-caste first. Here again social elevation of the outcastes and the destruction of the caste system were the chief concerns of the Missionaries. The caste system not only discriminated against the Dalits but also oppressed them. Man was born free; he was created to have equality with others and equal opportunities like anyone. He was not made to be subservient to any one. The caste system treated the Dalits as untouchables, 'social leper' and oppressed them. With this kid of conviction, the early Missionaries opposed the caste system. Thus, even before the advent of the 20th century, the LMS Missionaries working in the Tamil Field had an ideology biased against the caste system. This ideology operated in the context of the oppression and inequality meted out to the Dalits. The only difference between the earlier missionaries of the LMS Tamil field and the latter Missionaries is that the early Missionaries were not so vocal about it. Only a few had spoken about their ideology, but from this one should not conclude that others who had not been so vocal and expressive did not have a similar viewpoint. All the Missionaries came from an evangelical,

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44. *Mission Report,* 1879, p.14

Industrial Revolution and French Revolution melieu.[45] Although the early Missionaries did not clearly spell out their ideological conviction, yet they expressed it in what they were doing. For instance, they went about establishing schools for the pariah.[46]

b) The LMS Christian's ideology in the 20th century:

In the 20th century, during the period of out study, the ideological convictions were expressed much more clearly. For instance, the Report for 1919 reads thus: "... We must not lose sight of the 50 million out-castes of India."[47] The Report for 1922 stated the object of their Mission thus: "...The Mission is always attempting to deliver the converts from social bondage".[48] This shows that LMS Missionaries were not simply interested in fixing the "Christian" label to their converts and no more. They were interested in their day-to-day life situation.

During the period under-study, the ideological conviction of the LMS Christians was forcefully expressed and exercised in removing caste prejudices. Phillips had outlined his conviction thus:

> The gulf between Jew and Gentile was a caste distinction, for they could not eat together; a race distinction for they could not inter-marry; and deepest of all, a religious distinction, for the Gentiles were heathens. But Jew and Gentile became one in Christ Jesus.[49]

If Jew and Gentile came together or became one body of people, why not depressed classes and the caste people? That was his ideological defence. In their fight against the caste system, LMS Christians established schools to educate the Dalits. Through schools, they expressed their ideological conviction. They wanted

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45. Oddie, *social protest, op.cit.*, p.34
46. *Mission Report,* 1848, p.78-79
47. *Mission Report,* 1919, p.6
48. *Mission Report,* 1922, p.40
49. Godfrey Phillips, *The Missionary's Job,* London, Carey Press, 1929, p.24. (hereafter cited as *Missionary's Job)*

the Dalits to know that they had as much right as others to have equal opportunity in education. By imparting education, the LMS Christians wanted to socially elevate the Dalits. When could a Dalit believe and assert that he is socially equal to others? Only when educated. Thus, education was used as a powerful ideological weapon. The LMS Christians, in using education as a tool, at least in the schools achieved their goal. Walters, a deputation member(1923) made the following observation in which this point is made: ".. In one village school we saw Brahmin children sitting along side low caste and out-caste children, and taught by an outcaste or low caste man as teacher."[50] Not only through education but also through medical work the truth that the Dalit was also a human was established. In 1924, for instance, Dr. Pollard of the Erode Medical Mission, wrote: "About that woman, you see she finds it rather difficult to come in to see you because she is a caste woman. 'oh', said I, 'tell her it doesn't matter a bit, we treat all sorts of people here'"[51] Thus, LMS Christians struck at the caste system, with the conviction that it oppressed and distorted the image of God in the Dalit person. The LMS Christians attacked the caste system not only because it distorted the true humanity of the outcaste, but also because it disrupted "Koinonia" within the Christian community. Caste separated man from man in the society. This went contrary to the ideological conviction of the LMS Christians and so they condemned it. When it was condemned outside, how could one have it in the Church, in the "community of the elect", where "Jew and Gentile are reconciled in Christ"? How could caste practices prevail in the Church, in the "here and now"?[52] The attempt to exterminate caste prejudices took place in the Boarding Houses also.[53] LMS Christians made Dalit children sit along with the caste children. Thus, LMS Christians waged a definite war on caste prejudices, and attempted to establish the fact

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50. Walters, *India Through my Eyes;* London, LMS, 1923, p.45.
51. *Mission Report,* 1924, p.52.
52. *Mission Report,* 1928, p.23
53. G.E. Phillips, *Our sixth Form in South India,* London the Livingstone Press, 1930, p.15-16 (hereafter cited as *Our Sixth Form*)

that the Dalits were equal, as people, to any other class or caste. This effort grew out of their ideological conviction.

In the period from 1919-1939 also many LMS Christians did not explicitly discuss their ideological convictions. Only some did. However the silence, in print, of the many cannot be taken to mean that they had no convictions on the subject they were fully exercising their ideological convictions in what they were doing. For instance, Rev. T. Narasimhan, who did quite a job among the Kuravars at Attur, did not write anything about his social convictions. But he demonstrated his convictions in the work he was doing. Also other people testified to what his convictions were and how successfully they were exemplified in his work.[54] This must have been the case with others too.

Of those who did explain their ideological convictions in our period, one of the most important was, Rev. G.E. Phillips. He was India Foreign Secretary of the LMS in 1934 and before that he worked as a LMS Missionary at Tripattur, which was once a part of Salem Mission area. Apart from this source, we also have evidence from the writings of popley of the Erode Mission, and the Report of the Deputation in 1923.

c) Ideological convictions of the LMS Christians:

1) God loves the Dalit Person:

What exactly was the social ideology of the LMS Christians in the Tamil Field? The LMS Christians worked with the conviction that God was active in this world,[55] and that He loved humanbeings,

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54. Visitor's book of Kurava Girls Boarding Home in Salem Attur, 1929, p.1-24. In it, T.B. Krishnaswami, a Hindu and D.E.O. of Salem has written on 16-12-1931, "Servant of God & Well done".
See also, Visitors' Book of Kurava Boys' Boarding Home and School, Attur, 1928, p.1-59.

55. Phillips, *Missionary's job, op.cit.,* p.52

however lowly and downtrodden they happened to be.[56] G.E. Phillips, for instance, wrote:

> Tell an untouchable such as Munian that the God who made all things takes an interest in him, and you have brought him startling news, at first not easy either to understand or to accept. Convince him that the same God cares for him...and you have started in him a hidden spring of inspiration, hope and love.[57]

By imparting the news that God loves the Dalit person the LMS Christians had given him/her self-respect and the aspiration for an elevated position in society. They worked with the conviction that God was active in the world, effecting creative changes and bringing fresh things to birth. They conceived God as working; and that towards an ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of God, as they believed, was to renew and perfect all things.[58] And they considered themselves "as representatives of God's people to do His work in the world."[59]

2) The Dalit person has worth:

The LMS Christians were also convinced that God affirmed the worth of the individual.[60] Therefore, they thought that a Dalit was truly a person and taught him/her so. This was the greatest contribution which LMS Christians made to the Dalits. Phillips supports this view when he says:

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56. Godfrey E. Phillips, *The Untouchables Quest,* London, Edinburgh House Press, 1936, p.26. (hereafter cited as *Quest*). See also: Phillips, *Missionary's job.*loc. cit., p.14

55. Phillips, *Missionary's job, op.cit.,* p.52

56. Godfrey E. Phillips, *The Untouchables Quest,* London, Edinburgh House Press, 1936, p.26. (hereafter cited as *Quest*). See also: Phillips, *Missionary's job.*loc. cit., p.14

57. Phillips, *Quest, op.cit.,* p.26

58. Phillips, *Missionary's Job, op.cit.,* p.52.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Phillips, *Quest, op.cit.,* p.27

> He (the missionary) goes into the outcastes' quarters, tells them... that they are worth as much to God as the Brahmins are... It (Christianity) has accomplished things which are of more account. It was wonderful that the outcaste should learn that he is a man.[61]

Thus, to the Dalit who had no sense of self-worth, who had lost his moral nerve to live, and who always considered himself as the lowest of the beings was given the message that he was fully a man, and that he too, was entitled to a meaningful life and that he too could live a respectable life in the society.[62] The education which was given by the LMS Christians to the depressed class man was devised in such a way that he came to believe that he was truly human. The Report of the Deputation of 1923 observed that, "... Education in the sense in which we would employ the word, is the 'drawing out' of the whole personality".[63] Total development of the personality of the Dalit was the concern of the LMS Christians. All their activities in respect to the Dalits were rendered with a view to making them "people", "Beings", and "Men".[64]

3) New social order for the Dalits

The special characteristic of the Church had in its purview a concept of a new more just social order for the Dalits as well as for others. G.E. Phillips expressed this conviction thus: "But you would like to help the under-dog everywhere and to bring about a happier social order"[65] This objective was clear in the repudiation of the charge that the LMS Christians' were only interested in converting Dalits to Christianity. Popley, for instance, wrote in *Guardian* in response to a criticism that had been made by Bishop

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61. Phillips, *Outcaste's Hope, op.cit.*, p.37 & 85
62. Phillips, *Quest, op.cit.*, p.75
63. *Deputation Report 1923, op.cit.*, p.92
64. Phillips, *Quest, loc.cit.*, p.34; 94 reads: "...depressed classes are after all not really classes but people."
65. Phillips, *Missionary's Job, op.cit.*, p.54

Azariah. He had made it clear that the involvement of the LMS Christians with the Dalits was not simply to convert or proselytise them. He wrote thus:

> I believe that it is the duty of the Church to help forward the legitimate claims of these classes to freedom of opportunity and to equality before the laws of the land, and to do all that it can to improve, their position in life, and to do all this work in a spirit of real dis-interestedness without any thought of proselytism.[66]

Phillips, joining forces with Popley argues forcefully that, "their (Dalits) future is what matters, not that of abstractions like 'Christianity' or 'Hinduism' or even 'India'. What is going to become of A-, of B-, of C-, and what does God think of them?"[67] If conversion was not their only aim, then what was the aim? The LMS Christians were striving to establish a just and happy social order. Phillips, in another book, described the motive of LMS Christians thus:... "God has abundantly made it manifest that He has sent us to the outcaste, to preach good things".[68] He quotes the Nazareth Manifesto of Jesus Christ[69] Which gave birth to the "Social Gospel" and the "theology of the here and now". From all this it becomes clear that LMS Christians strove to establish the kingdom of God on earth, and in this context, they emphasised a just and happy social order, which is biblically an essential characteristic of the kingdom of God. Phillips strengthens this view when he says:

> Whether it is Bible study or singing Evangelism; whether our attitude to Hinduism and to Islam, or problems of temperance and administration and pastoral work, legal and land affairs; or village hygiene and village gardens; village

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66. *Guardian,* May 28, 1936, p.345.
67. Phillips, *Quest, op.cit.,* p.94-95
68. Phillips, *The outcastes' hope, op.cit.,* p.95
69. Luke, 4:18-19

> schools or a village scout masters' training course, we are breathing it all in the atmosphere of the Kingdom of God.[70]

That LMS Christians were striving to establish a just order come home forcefully when Phillips says: "We rejoice in any promise to the untouchable of decent conditions of life, with opportunities for cleanliness, health and education, just as we rejoice in the provision of decent homes in our own country instead of slums"[71] Thus, LMS Christians' ideological convictions had to do with the kingdom of God and this motivated them to create a happy and just social order, where the Dalits would be equal to all and happy with all.

In sum, this is what one can say about LMS Christians' ideological contribution to the Dalits: LMS Christians had the conviction that God was active in the world and that they were working in the Mission Field as God's representatives. As God's representatives, they conceived their business as a Mission to establish a just social order which belonged to the "here and now" kingdom of God. In exercising this ideological conviction, they helped the Dalit to know that he is a man, born to be free and equal and that as a person, he, too, had worth in himself. Thus, they gave hope to the Dalits to live a meaningful life. They enabled him to have a changed outlook about himself, and about society. In a nutshell, they restored to the Dalit person the original image that was intended for him/her and that which belonged to him/her, rightfully. All their activities in the Tamil Field were directed towards this end. But, how does one measure the impact or consequence of this ideological contribution to the Dalits. It cannot be measured easily. It cannot be measured easily because the impact would have been felt not only by the Dalit converts, but also by the Dalits outside the Christian Community but who had come under Christian influence. But one can definitely say that the ideological contribution of the LMS Christians particularly helped the Dalits at large, irrespective whether they converted to Christianity or not. It is unlikely that there would have been a

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70. Phillips, *Quest, op. cit.*, p.47-48

Dalit Movement but for the ideological contribution of Christian Missions and thus, it can be said that the LMS Christians shaped and undergirded the movement of the Dalits.

4) LMS Christians Contribution to the education of Dalits:

Education which LMS Christians gave to the Dalits was an important contribution. In the earlier period, LMS Christians considered education as a means to evangelism. But in the 20th century, their attitude to education changed. Education came now to be seen not simply as an evangelistic tool but as a means for making man whole. This shift of emphasis in education took place in our period. Some of the questions arising out of the changing perception of the role of education might be put as follows: what did LMS Christians hope to accomplish for the Dalits through education? what was their motive? which LMS Christians involved themselves in imparting education to the Dalits? What was the consequence of all this?

a) Educational involvement of LMS Christians with Dalits in 19th Century:

LMS Christians began to impart education to Dalits even before the period of our study. The early missionaries seem to have started schools, wherever they went, as soon as they went there. For instance, at Salem schools were started by Rev. Crisp in 1827 or about[72] the year he started his Missionary work. At Erode, the first teacher was sent to Perundurai by Mr. Addis, the Missionary.[73] This could have been the case at Attur and Coimbatore also. We are not, however, here concerned about when they started schools, but why they started them. Through schools Missionaries anticipated converts and so they started schools. This fact is made clear in the Mission Reports.[74] The Report for 1892 states this:

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71. Phillips, *Quest, op. cit.*, p. 24.
72. Whitney, *Hundred Years, op. cit.*, p.1.
73. Popley, *The Village Goes to school*, Westminster, The Livingstone Press (on the spot booklet series) Year unknown. (hereafter cited as Village Goes)
74. *Mission Reports:* 1848, p. 78-79 1864, p.92.

"... there is a marked tendency among the lower classes, even in the villages, in favour of education, which ought to be made use of by us as a means towards the great end we have in view."[75] Along with this central aim, the missionaries seem to have had other subsidiary motives as well. They wanted to elevate the social condition of the Dalits;[76] to introduce new and improved methods in industrial training;[77] to remove illiteracy.[78]

But in spite of the numerous converts they had from the depressed classes, and other communities, missionaries went on with their educational programme. What was the sanction for continuing this programme?

b) In 20th Century:

In 1919 the LMS Christians in the Tamil Field had 29 schools for boys with 1,748 pupils and 8 schools with 861 girls at Salem and Attur, 76 schools with 2, 511 boys and 7 schools with 519 girls at Erode, and 24 schools with 2, 183 boys and 8 schools with 509 girls at coimbatore.[79] In other words, there were 152 schools with 8, 331 scholars. The missionaries felt responsible for the education of society as a whole and so there were schools for caste children also. But most of the schools were for converts and non-converts among the Dalits.[80] Apart from schools in the Villages, the LMS had three High Schools at Erode,[81] Salem[82] and Coim-

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75. *Mission Report:* 1892, p.126. cf. G.E. Phillips, *The Gospel in the world,* London, Duckworth, 1939, p.223 reads: "... In dealing with backward class people, it is impossible to evangelize without at the same time educating," and G.E. Phillips, *Missionary's Job,* op. cit., p.27.
76. *Mission Report,* 1848, p.79. See also: Phillips, *Quest, op. cit.,* p.40
77. *Mission Report,* 1853, p.94
78. *Mission Report,* 1856, p.86
79. *Mission Report,* 1919, p.91
80. *Mission Report,* 1921, p.53. reads "... In one of our four schools, the headmaster had admitted some twenty chucklers children, the rest of the scholars being either pariahs, Christians or Mohammedans."
81. *Mission Report,* 1920, p.31
82. *Mission Report,* 1922, p.109

batore[83] respectively in 1919. The LMS Christians in maintaining schools in these areas had the Dalits in view. Walters observed:

> It is difficult to get a new idea into their heads, and unless they are taken in hand when converted, and given some of the rudiments of education, there can be but little growth in knowledge and no change of rising above their environment.[84]

But they also had other purposes in maintaining these schools. They, through schools, intended to train Indian Christians for service as teachers, catechists, evangelists, pastors and Bible-women. Fourthly, education was meant as a Christian contribution towards the social uplift of the Indian people as a whole.[85] Thus there was a combined motive in maintaining schools.

c) Education for Rural life and Development of Personality:

Whatever their motive had been, by 1923 the LMS Christians in the Tamil Field realized that those, who were educated in the mission schools, went to either cities or towns thus defeating the very motive of their benefactors which was to train pupils for responsible membership in the society and in the Church.[86] Hence, they made efforts to "... link(s) the education more closely with the life to which most of the boys and girls ought to be expected to return, and through them to uplift the whole tone of the village Churches."[87] In this context G.E. Phillips raised some relevant questions:

> Can an education be evolved which in a thoroughly Christian way, while equipping the pupils of the out-caste ancestry with the instruments of knowledge, will not only change his character but change the life of his home village? Can we

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83. Mission Report, *1923, p.47*
84. Walters, *India Through my Eyes, Op. cit.,* p.35
85. *Ibid.,* p.36. See also: Phillips, Missionarys' Job, p.31.
86. Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, op. cit.,* p.66 cf: Walters. *India through my Eyes, loc. cit.,* p.39
87. *Mission Report,* 1924, p.20

> get schools which not only educated individuals, but quicken whole communities.[88]

It was at this juncture that a definite shift in emphasising rural education had taken place.[89] Not only did they emphasise rural education, but the whole concept of education was reconsidered by the LMS Christians. Why education, after all? Rural education was intended with more emphasis on the rural context. Alright, But, why education to all? According to them, education was for developing the total personality of the individual. They understood education "... in the sense in which we would employ the word, is the drawing out of the whole personality... Education is everything that tends to develop a human personality in communion with God and love to man."[90] This is where the theological and ideological convictions of the LMS Christians came to exercise their influence in a combined manner. According to them, education, whether offered in rural schools or in Town schools, was to help develop the total personality of the pupils. In other words, they wanted to identify the worth of the person and promote this sacredness of his personality. This led to the establishment of Moga type community schools in The Tamil Field, especially at Erode and Salem.[91]

d) Community Schools:

Moga was a small rural centre in the Punjab where the presbyterian Missionary Society of America worked. Here a pioneer named William J. Mckee had developed a work which promised to transform village education, and through it village life in India.[92] The aim of the Moga school, as envisioned by Mckee, was:

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88. Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, op. cit.* p.66
89. *Mission Report,* 1926, p.22 cf: Phillips, *Quest, op. cit.,* p.45
90. *Deputation Report, 1923, op.cit.,* p.92.
91. *Mission Report,* 1927, p.57. cf. Goodall, *A History, op. cit.* p.82, 491
92. William J.Mckee, *Developing a project curriculum for village schools in India,* Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 1930, p.106-107; 133-139; 369 (hereafter cited as project Curriculum) See also: Mckee, "Rural Education in India", IRM July 1923, p.264-268; 345. "The Four month's Educational course at Moga" *Harvest Field,* Jan 1924, p.11-14. Guardian, Jan 12, 1923, p.5 April 6, 1923, p.160-61.

> To provide as large an opportunity as possible for the fullest growth and development of selected village boys, in such a social environment and directed by such social aims as will inspire and fit them in life and character to serve their communities.[93]

The aim also included in itself the stimulating and training of minds most effectively, than was possible under the old literary system and to educate pupils "... in life, for life and in a more living way."[94] Such a community school was introduced at Erode in 1921 headed by Brough. The school was residential and was carried on as a model village, where vocational training, in weaving, agriculture, carpentry and building was given to boys.[95] All was planned as a practical preparation for village life. Emphasising the importance of such community schools, Popley remarked, "... all paths in village uplift lead back to the community school and go out from it"[96] Community schools used "project methods" which enabled pupils to use their faculty to the fullest possible extent.[97] Poultry, book shop, post office, library, merchandise and dispensary projects were experimented with at the Erode community school. Students, who lived in the community school, while learning, went about to surrounding villages, cleaned and straightened out roads, taught games and hygeine to the village children. In 1929 this school had 148 Christian and 54 Hindu boys.[98] In 1933 Popley took over responsibility for the community school from Brough.[99] In 1934, Phillips, after a secretarial visit to Erode, noted that the community school had less rural aspects in its surroundings due to the extensions of the railway and the town. However, the community school continued to serve its purpose in equipping boys to

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93. Mckee, *Project Curriculum, loc. cit.* p.133.
94. *Deputation Report 1923, op. cit.*, p.102-103.
95. Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, op. cit.*, p.68-69
96. Popley, *Village goes, op. cit.*, p.5
97. Popley's book describes everything about community school at Erode. See also: *Mission Report,* 1930, p.62-63.
98. *Mission Report,* 1930, p.62-63
99. *Mission Report,* 1934, p.47.

go back to their villages and helped in the social and economic uplift of villages.[100]

The girl's boarding school at Salem was started in 1893.[101] This became a community school for girls. It was started with the ideal of providing an education for girls which was suitable to fit them for ordinary village life. A farm was attached to the school in which the girls worked. Here girls were taught nature study, harvesting, etc.[102] In 1923 itself it was close to the ideals of the community school.[103] Here also, as was at Erode, vocational training such as mat-making, embroidery, agriculture, mother craft and domestic economy were given.[104] Thus, these two community schools were able to provide an education that was suited to the rural life and they helped in developing character in pupils.

e) Training schools:

A community training school for men was started at Erode in 1926[105] and another for women at Salem in the same year.[106] The training school at Erode trained young men as teachers, mainly for village schools. The object of their training was to make them efficient teachers, and secondly, to fit them to be leaders in all kinds of village improvement. They learned not only about child nurture, and how to teach arithmatic and language to children, but also to handle a plough, to weed a field and to sow a crop. Each

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100. Interview-Balraj-His elder brother Samuel Johnson took over the Principalship of Community School from Popley. He was the first Indian Christian to hold that responsibility. cf: *Report by Rev. H. Leonard Hurst after a secretarial visit to India*, July 1946-March 1947, London, LMS, 1947 p.26 (hereafter cited as *Secretarial Report*)
101. Whitney, *Hundred Years*, op. cit., p.47
102. *Mission Reports.* 1923, p.47 1924, p.49.
103. *Deputation Report 1923, op. cit.*, 104
104. Phillips, *Back to India*, London, the Livingstone Press, 1934, p.78 (hereafter cited as *Back to India*)
105. *Mission Report*, 1927, p.57. cf: *Goodall, op. cit.*, p.494.
106. *Mission Report*, 1929, p.22-23. cf: *Deputation*, Report 1923, op. cit., p.127

student had his own plot of land and looked after the crop. Sometimes they conducted surveys to study village conditions, the reason for its factions or epidemics etc. They also used "project methods".[107]In 1930, the training school had 82 pupils and served the whole Tamil area.[108] From 1933 onwards, the Training School conducted Summer Schools or refresher courses for teachers who were trained there before.[109]

The training school for women started at Salem was first managed by Miss Stanyon.[110] That year the first batch of students passed out. Apart from the usual curriculum, girl trainees got practical experience in Sunday schools, girl guides and other activities.[111] In 1938, Miss Solomon, a local Christian, became Headmistress.[112]

Thus, training schools at Erode and Salem enabled largely the Christian converts from the depressed classes or the Dalits to become teachers, and leaders of their communities.

f) Boarding schools:

At coimbatore, there were boarding schools for boys and girls and they were looked after by Robertson and Miss Grierson, the two missionaries who stayed there for a long time.[113] Salem had a boarding school for girls and a Residential High School for boys.[114] In the boys' High School, Rev. Bernard Thomas, an

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107. Popley, *Village goes, op. cit.,* p.15-17
108. *Mission Report,* 1931, p.75.
109. Popley, "Summer school on Project method, and craft- work, Erode," *Guardian,* May 5, 1938, p.285
110. Whitney, *Hundred Years, op. cit.,* p.80
111. *Mission Report,* 1930, p.58
112. Whitney, *Hundred years, op. cit.,* p.80
113. Phillips, *Secretarial Report, 1934, op. cit.,* p.68.
114. *Mission Report,* 1930, p.58. Balraj's three brothers, Dr. M.A. Thangaraj, Amirtharaj and Kanakaraj studied under Bernard Thomas. Thangaraj became an educationist, Amirtharaj became a Deputy General Manager in the Southern Railways, and Kanakaraj became a pastor in Coimbatore diocese

educational missionary of the LMS served as principal from 1925,[115] and Mr. V. Vedanayagam served as Headmaster.[116] In 1925, a second hostel for boys was added and the number of residents rose to 52. At Erode, Brough established a central Boarding School for boys, and Miss Inglis, a boarding home for girls.[117] These Boarding Homes largely served Dalit converts, but others were also there in a minority.[118] The Boarding schools helped produce educated leadership from among the Christian community; built character and created leadership.

g) High Schools

There were three High Schools at Erode, Coimbatore and Salem respectively. The Salem High School, which became a residential High School, was started by Maurice Phillips in 1876.[119] After him, Robinson looked after the school[120] and Sundaram, a local Christian, worked under him as Headmaster from 1884, and Sundaram continued to serve the school till 1924.[121] Mr. V. Vedanayagam, who came from the Madura Mission succeeded Sundaram in 1924. K.T. Paul was a patron of this school.[122]

P.J. Devasahayam worked as principal of the Coimbatore High School in 1899,[123] and Gordon Mathews, the LMS educational Missionary, served under him as vice-principal. Devasahayam served as principal till 1930, in which year he was succeeded by

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115. Whitney, *Hundred years, op. cit.*, p.80
116. *Ibid.*, p.79
117. Popley, *Village goes, op. cit.*, p.7-8
118. G.E. Phillips, *Our Sixth Form in South India*, London The Livingstone Press, 1930, p.15-16 (hereafter cited as *Our Sixth Form*)
119. Whitney, *Hundred years, op. cit.*, p.36. cf: Goodall History, op. cit., p.75
120. Whitney, *Hundred years, loc. cit.*, p.47
121. *Ibid.*, p.78
122. *Mission Report*, 1927, p.54
123. *Mission Report*, 1928, p.58

M.J. Sargunam.[124] In 1933 the LMS withdrew its support from the High School and since then it has been self-supporting.[125] The Erode High School began with Brough.[126] But it was closed in 1926 and in its place the Community School was started.[127]

Almost all these schools seem to have had a large number of Non-Christian students and staff.[128] The High Schools in the Tamil Field were meant to evangelise scholars,[129] but they did not succeed in converting large numbers. However, they succeeded in providing a Christian atmosphere and built up the character of the pupils. And, at a particular time when the Mission support to the High School at Coimbatore was withdrawn, the old non-Christian boys collected money for the school and helped in other ways.[130] All these high schools maintained efficiency and a good educational standard.[131]

Thus, through educational institutions-village schools, High Schools, —Training schools, community schools, and Boarding Homes,— the LMS Christians offered their best to the Christian and non-Christian communities. Excepting High Schools, where non-Christians out-numbered Christians, in all other institutions pupils of Dalit origin were in large numbers. Thus, LMS Christians contributed significantly to the cause of education of the Dalits. In 1939, through 130 schools in the Tamil Field, the LMS Christians served about 6, 315 scholars.[132] By instituting schools in villages and imparting education, the LMS Christians helped people of Dalit origin to elevate themselves educationally, socially and economi-

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124. *Mission Report,* 1934, p.78
125. *Mission Report,* 1934, p.18
126. *Ibid.,* p.47
127. *Mission Report,* 1931 p.75
128. Walters, *India through my Eyes, op.cit.,* p. 36-39
129. Phillips, *Missionary's Job, op. cit.,* p. 31.
130. Phillips, *Secretarial Report, 1934, op.cit.,* p. 64
131. *Mission Report,* 1931, p. 47
132. *Mission Report,* 1931, p. 47

cally. Illiteracy was removed from rural villages which largely consisted of Dalits.[133] Schools helped remove caste barriers and thus helped Dalits to a higher social position. Education made untouchables, touchables.[134] The Rural context was very much stressed in schools. Through Boarding homes and High Schools, the Dalits and others were helped to develop character and leadership qualities. In all educational institutions, the LMS Christians concentrated on the development of the total personality. Apart from educating thousands and thousands of Dalit children, and helping them find their right place in the Society, the LMS Christians produced leaders for the Church, for the church, state and institutions. Besides, the LMS Christians provided leadership to the Dalit Movement. The Deputation of 1923 observed:

> Some of us attended the Madras Assembly (Parliament), and heard several speeches, and when a speech struck us as particularly fine, we enquired who the speaker was, and in two cases out of three were informed that he was an old boy of one of Our High Schools. It is impossible to measure up the results of the work done in these schools.[135]

Thus, LMS Christians in the Tamil Field provided backbone to the movement of the Dalits through their educational Mission.

5. The LMS Christians' Medical Contribution to the Dalits:

a) Medical Mission in the Tamil Field

The second important contribution of LMS Christians to the Dalits came through medical Missions. The LMS did not have medical mission in all the four places of our study (Tamil Field) viz: Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode. This work was concentrated at Erode. The LMS had a hospital for women and children there. But in other places, although there were no hospitals, the

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133. *Phillips, Quest, op. cit.,* p.50

134. Phillips, *Our Sixth Form, op. cit.,* p. 15-16

135. Walters. *India through my Eyes, op. cit.,* p.37

LMS Christians, officially or unofficially in their individual capacities and in collaboration with other agencies including the government, were able to render medical assistance to the Dalits in particular and other communities in general. Certain questions we raise with regard to Medical Mission of the LMS are: How and why and for whom the medical Mission was started in the Tamil Field? Where did the Dalits stand in the total Medical Mission of the LMS? what did they intend to do for the Dalits and what was the quantum of service rendered? Did Medical Mission LMS Christians involve themselves with the Dalits simply on humanitarian grounds or were there other motives? How far were the medical Missions in the Tamil Field working consistently with the general ideology of the LMS? Who or which of the LMS Christians were instrumental in rendering this service?

Since the Medical Mission in the Tamil Field was first started at Erode, we begin from there. Originally an outstation of the Coimbatore work, Erode became a residential station in 1902.[136] The Erode Medical Mission owes its origin to the first resident Missionary, Antony W. Brough.[137] Referring to all that was done by Brough, Goodall says, "... All this was not one Man's achievement, but one man was used more powerfully than any other in the movement which had these consequences. This was Anthony W.Brough"[138] G. E. Phillips, after a secretarial visit to India, wrote about Brough and his work thus:

> In Erode we found a whole population overshadowed by the impending departure of the Rev. A. W. Brough. Deputation Reports usually make little references to individuals, but no true account of Erode town and district work can be given without referring to the good which has come out of forty years of effort concentrated on one district.[139]

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136. Goodall, *A History, op. cit.*, p.82
137. *Ibid.*
138. *Ibid.*, p. 85
139. Phillips, *Secretarial Report 1934, op. cit.*, p. 67

Brough, after coming to Erode, won respect and attention in the public life of the district as well as amongst thousands of panchamas (Dalits) who found in him their friend and through him their Saviour.[140] For a time he was Chairman of the Erode Municipality, and held this responsibility during a plague year. He was also the first non-official President of the taluk Board of Erode.[141] Why are we concentrating on this one Missionary when we are studying the Medical Mission and its consequence to the Dalits? It was Brough who started the Medical Mission at Erode. It was his dream, vision and goal that made the Medical Mission an effective instrument in uplifting the depressed classes in the Erode district.

b) Medical Mission at Erode

The Medical work at Erode began in the year 1909 with Brough taking the initial as well as sustaining interest in it. In the initial years the Medical Mission, without any hospital facility rendered service to women and children. In 1919 the hospital at Erode was opened, after the arrival of the Medical Missionary, Dr. Hilda M.Pollard.[142] In 1919 this hospital contained only 21 beds, and Dr. Pollard was the only medically qualified person available to render medical service. In that year 372 in- patients were catered for, and 4, 680 out-patients were attended to.[143] The total number of visits of out-patients that year, with one doctor and one Indian assistant, was 16, 069. Although the Medical Mission was started as late as 1909, yet the impact of the Mission was widespread in the district. The Report for 1919 said:

> Much as the Tamil District suffered from influenza, the reports give the impression that the Christians were able to protect themselves better than the surrounding Hindus of the

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140. Goodall, *A History, op.cit.*, p. 83
141. *Ibid.*
142. Popley, *village goes, op. cit.*, p. 27 (my guess is that it could have been published somewhere around 1934)
143. *Mission Report*, 1919, p. 101

> same class; speaking broadly, the Christian mortality was small, and we have to be thankful that our institution lost so few lives.[144]

From 1919, Dr. Pollard guided the hospital with that blend of professional competance and spiritual discernment which give to Christian Medical Service its unique power.[145] Walters, a deputation member, who visited the Erode hospital, wrote:

> We have nothing but praise for our Medical Missionary work, we have seven centres, with Missionaries in charge, in connection with some of them there are dispensaries scattered through the villages for many miles around which are conducted by Indian Christian doctors, trained by the Missionaries in the hospitals... the hospital compound was a model of cleanliness and order and the patients were well tended and looked exceedingly happy and grateful[146]

Dr. Pollard carried on with the Medical Mission single-handed until 1923, in which year Miss Edna Baker was appointed as Nursing Superintendent on the recommendation of the Deputation.[147] That year a nurses training course for Indian women was started.[148] In December 1924, the first Indian Christian Medical graduate joined the Erode hospital. That was Miss Mackadan and with her joining two weekly out-dispensaries were started.[149] A second European doctor was appointed in the year 1925.[150]

Until 1926, Dr. Pollard, with meagre local resources and fees and Mission fund, carried on the work, not only in the hospital but also in the surrounding villages. In 1926 the LMS decided to maintain the Erode hospital more efficiently both with respect to

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144. *Mission Report,* 1919, p.24
145. Interview-Balraj and Jessie Jacob.
146. Walters, *India through my eyes, op. cit.,* p. 47
147. *Deputation Report, 1923, op. cit.,* p.162
See also: *Mission Report,* 1923, p.128
148. *Mission Report,* 1922, p.127
149. *Mission Report,* 1924, p. 52.
150. *Mission Report,* 1926, p.41

staff and equipment, and therefore made an increased contribution.[151] The Medical Mission at Erode did not maintain the Medical skills only for the missionaries, but successfully trained a cadre of Indian nurses from among the Dalits. Popley says:

> Some of the nurses in the hospital are girls from the local villages who have been trained in the hospital by the doctors and the nursing sister. It is a testimony to the power of the Gospel to see these girls from the depressed classes rendering such fine service to the sick of all communities.[152]

The number of trainee nurses rose from 6 to 11.[153] In the same year a motor car was given for medical work and it proved to be a great help for village calls.[154] Until 1928, the Erode hospital seems to have served largely the out-castes, for the Report says, "...During the year the number of in-patients increased, but there is still a strong prejudice among the caste patients against coming to the hospital."[155] In 1929 the staff which consisted of two doctors and a nurse, paid visits to 120 villages more or less regularly.[156] In the same year, Dr. Miss Elijah, daughter of a LMS pastor, and herself educated at the LMS Bentinck High School, joined the hospital as assistant to Pollard. During the epidemic of influenza in 1929 at Erode, a splendid service was rendered by the whole staff of the hospital. Phillips, in appraising the value of medical mission to Boarding Homes says:

> You will not have a boy come in from the playground with a face all twisted with pain, just bitten by a great black scorpion. Nor, you may be thankful to say, will news come to you that Krishnan, who was in class yesterday, has died of cholera today, and is being carried to the burning ground this evening.[157]

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151. Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, op. cit.*, p.123
152. Popley, *village goes, op. cit.*, p. 27-28
153. *Mission Report*, 1927, p.143
154. *Ibid.*, p.57
155. *Mission Report*, 1928, p.59
156. *Mission Report*, 1929, p.63
157. Phillips, *Our Sixth Form, op. cit.*, p.16

To this extent the Medical Mission was useful to the communities around Erode, to the Dalit girls who joined nursing training and to children in the Boarding Homes. By 1929, the Erode hospital had on an average, in a year, 460 in-patients, 4, 685 out- patients, and the total number of visits of out-patients stood at 13, 411.[158] In 1931, a new hospital was erected at Chennimalai in memory of Brough's son Hubert, who lost his life in the First world War in the attempt to save another.[159] This hospital was for both men and women, and ministered to the needs of the village Christian Community around the centre.[160]

By the year 1933, the Medical Mission at Erode was visited by 10, 160 out-patients, and this record was more or less regularly maintained throughout the period of our study.[161]

In the year 1935, with four doctors, the number of trainee nurses increased from 15 to 18 and in the following years to 19.[162]

By 1939, the record put in-Patients at 1, 433, out-patients at 10, 454, and the total number of visits of out-patients at 34, 377. In a twenty year period, the Medical Mission at Erode, trained 196 nurses, who largely came from the Dalit Communities[163]

Medical Mission in other areas:

As pointed out earlier, the medical Mission of the LMS was not confined to Erode and Chennimalai alone. It went further to Attur, Salem and Coimbatore as well. In these places, the Medical work was carried on by individual Missionaries, depending on the need and availability of medical personnel. At Salem, for instance,

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158. Figures worked out on the basis of Medical Mission data provided in the Mission Reports from 1919 to 1929, p.101, 113, 181, 127, 128, 139, 141, 143, 149, 151-year wise.
159. *Mission Reports,* 1932, p.53. cf. Goodall, *A History, op. cit.,* p.85.
160. Popley, *village goes op. cit.,* p.28
161. *Mission Report,* 1933, p.140
162. *Mission Report,* 1936, p.81.
163. cf *Mission Reports,* 1919-1939 the Medical Mission data.

in 1924 at the time of plague, the local Indian evangelist and his wife "acted like heroes".[164] The missionaries, however untrained as they were in imparting medical knowledge, seem to have taught the local evangelist, teacher and their spouses elementary medical knowledge for use in places where proper medical attention was lacking.[165] In 1926, in a village at Salem, when there was an out-break of cholera, Mr. Whitney and Mrs. Whitney, who was a doctor,[166] were able to give some medicine, and they also directed the attention of the village authorities to unhealthy conditions in the village.[167] In the year 1934, a more official Medical Mission seems to have operated at Salem with special emphasis on eradication of leprosy. The Report for the year reads:

> To rid the city of leprosy, great campaign has been carried on, and a house to house visitation is being made. Mrs. Hatch, with a doctor and a nurse, visited about 2, 000 houses in one suburb, and registered the number of lepers and their address, so that they might get treatment. New clinics have been opened. There are about 1,000 lepers in Salem alone.[168]

From all this it becomes clear that the LMS Christians in the Salem area had maintained a kind of unofficial health service as one of their obligations.

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164. *Mission Report,* 1925, p.53

165. Phillips, *Quest, op. cit.,* p.74 reads "... but hundreds of lives are saved in epidemics, and thousands lifted from weakness of efficiency, by the simple health instruction given by pastors and teachers, quite apart from the help rendered in a few places by Mission hospitals."

166. Goodall, *A History, op. cit.,* p.85

167. *Mission Report,* 1934, p.45-46

168. Phillips, *Secretarial Report 1934, op.cit.,* p.66.
It reads, "... In Salem Town and District and to a lesser degree in other places we saw interesting evidences of a recent campaign by the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association in which our Missionaries have unofficially taken an effective part."

In the Coimbatore area, no vigorous medical service was undertaken. This was because there was no medical missionary stationed there. Yet, in a small way the Coimbatore Mission seems to have contributed towards the development of public health. The Report for 1930, for instance, says:

> The modern missionary's evangelism in Coimbatore includes taking a leading part in welfare week (when Boy Scouts and Rovers cleaned up some of the slums), walking in procession to display health, temperance and sanitation mottos and diagram's.[169]

Here again the service seems to have been rendered on behalf of the needy, helpless and poor.

d) Medical Mission and the Dalits:

Whom did the Medical Mission mainly serve? Goodall, referring to Erode Medical Mission, says: "...It concentrated upon the needs of women and children, and, while centered in the towns, it was carried into the villages as far as resources could permit." [170] And G.E. Phillips has this to say: "...in India the LMS has deliberately chosen to place its hospitals not in large towns, where there are private doctors and Government hospitals, but in village centres where the need is greatest".[171] These statements only appear to contradict each other. Whereas Phillips gives the impression that Erode was a village centre on a small town, Goodall gives the impression that it is a town.[172] Even if one called Erode a town, it was a very small one and certainly served the predominantly rural area surrounding it.[173] So, one can safely say that Erode was

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169. *Mission Report,* 1930, p.64
170. Goodall, *A History, op. cit.,* p.85
171. Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, op.cit.,* p.72
172. Goodall's book appeared in 1954.
173. Phillips, *Secretarial Report, op.cit.,* p.67. See also: Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, loc.cit,* p.72 reads: "...in India the LMS has deliberately chosen to place its hospitals not in large towns, where there are private doctors and Government hospitals, but in village centres where the need is greatest."

more rural than urban oriented, atleast well into the 1930's. One certainly gets the impression, based on MIssion Reports and Phillips accounts, that the Medical Mission was mainly interested in the well-being of the village and village centres rather than the towns. This is the implication of Popley's statement that "....When this was started (Erode Hospital) there was no provision in this district for medical help to women and children except from the general work of the municipal hospital at Erode. The women in the villages often suffered terribly from the lack of proper medical attention".[174] So the Medical Mission at Erode was meant for people in the villages and the substantial portion of the village population belonged to the Dalit Communities. [175]

The Medical Mission was started for those Dalits who came into Christianity and for those who did not, although caste people were not ignored. The Medical Mission at Erode largely served the Dalits. This again needs to be seen in the light of what Phillips said about the mass movement area:

> Medical work is a recognized opening in every kind of Mission and it is perhaps specially valuable in mass movement districts. The outcastes are of all the people in India, the most densely ignorant of the simplest laws of hygeine and child nurture.[176]

Erode was a mass movement area, and the people who lived there largely were outcastes, i.e. members of the depressed classes or the Dalits. From this it becomes clear that LMS, in starting a medical mission at Erode, were primarily intent upon serving the Dalits. This view is supported by the Mission Report for 1927 which said:

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174. Popley, *Village goes*, op.cit., p.27

175. cf. Section on LMS related Christians-Erode part.

176. Phillips, *The Outcastes' Hope, op.cit.*, p.127.

> The majority of patients in the general ward of the Erode hospital are outcastes from the villages around Erode though amongst them are patients of all castes. [177]

Even as late as 1934, after a secretarial visit to India, G.E. Phillips wrote about the Erode hospital thus:

> It is somewhat hampered by financial difficulties due to the fact that it so largely ministers to the most needy people such as outcaste Christian women from the villages, who cannot possibly pay fees for treatment. [178]

Thus, the Medical Mission at Erode and in other places in general, mainly served the Dalits.

e) Purpose of the Medical Mission in the Tamil Field

What was the purpose of the Medical Mission in the Tamil Field? It served the Dalits as we have seen. But, was its motive only to serve, relieve people from pain and cure diseases? What was its primary motive? Goodall says, "... the work is mostly simply a response to human need. It had, further prove to be an evangelistic 'agency' opening a door of opportunity and quickening perception of more than bodily needs and remedies." [179] So, the purpose was primarily a response to human need and, secondarily, evangelistic. But then Goodall goes on ".... the work (of Medical Mission) is both God-like in itself and hastens the coming of kingdom of God".[180] This explains the primary motive clearly. If LMS medical service was God-like, then the LMS Christians, too, were, like their master, interested in making man whole.[181] Christ

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177. *Mission Report*, 1927. p.56.

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179. Goodall, *A History, op.cit.*, p.524

180. *Ibid.*

181. Phillips, *Back to India, op.cit.*, p.79. Referring to Medical Mission, Phillips says, "... these indications are illustrations of the forces for the transforming of human life which the Christian religion has always set in motion."

was interested in man, in his body, mind and soul. "Hastens the coming of kingdom of God" could mean that LMS Christians were attempting to establish an ideal and healthy community where man was whole, healthy, equal and God-like. They wanted to make man free from diseases, from superstition, from deprivation of opportunity, and make him whole, liveable and equal with all and accepted by all. A new community seems to have been their goal. This point is strengthened by the observation of Popley, who strengthened and continued the rural reconstruction programme at Erode, who says: "The Medical service of the Mission is an important factor in the building up of the new village community."[182]

How did LMS Christians build up new village communities? They introduced education, and medical service went along with it. To quote Popley again:

> By means of talks to the women who come for special summer schools, and to the girls in the Boarding Homes, and by means of visits to village centres, a programme of health education is being carried on throughout the area, which is making a distinct difference in many village homes today. [183]

The Report for 1940 reads:

> A feature of our medical work in India has been the development of extra-mural medical services. Through the village health-centres and clinics and through the work of the travelling dispensaries the skilled service of the hospital staff is brought to the very door of the humblest villager, and health-education and preventive measures are promoted.[184]

Thus, LMS Christians, through their medical service, wanted not only to heal man's sickness, but also create an ideal village community, where he would be whole and healthy.

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182. Popley, *village goes, op.cit.,* p.27 cf. Section on Education.

183. Popley, *village goes, loc.cit.,* p.28

184. *Mission Report,* 1940, p.21. cf. Minutes of the Medical Sub-Committee of F & RC held at Bangalore, July 6, 1944, p.4.

f) Consequences of the Medical Mission to the Dalits:

First of all, the Medical Mission in the Tamil Field, and especially at Erode, served largely the Dalits, not only the converts from depressed classes were taken care of, but also the whole village community was taken into consideration. The benefit the Dalits derived out of the medical Mission was considerable. Treatment-wise, the number of Dalits who benefitted from the Medical Mission is enumerated in Mission Reports. But the total impact of the Medical Mission was even greater than such statistics reveal. Programmes like health- education, hygeine and propaganda would have had a far ranging impact that cannot be readily measured.

Secondly, the Dalits learned to use the medical facilities that were available through the Medical Mission, often paying small fees.[185] The Report for 1934 says: "...one of the most encouraging features of our work is the way the people of the villages have learnt to use us. They don't - don't so often-have to be pressed and coaxed to come in for treatment now"[186]

Thirdly, the training of nurses from the Dalit Communities was another fruit which the depressed classes reaped from the Medical Mission.[187]

Fourthly, the Medical Mission influence upon the Dalits indirectly proved to be a powerful agency in breaking caste prejudices. There was a concerted effort on the part of the LMS Medical personnel to prove that a Dalit was a man as much as a caste man, and that he had equal potential to heal himself. With regard to the treatment offered, equality was maintained and equal opportunity provided. Thus, the Medical Mission helped raise the status of the Dalits from a lowly status to that status that was previously the monopoly of the caste man. The worth of the person, whether

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185. *Deputation Report 1923, op.cit.,* p.163 reads "...no patient in real need is turned away intended for want of money". cf. Phillips, *Secretarial Report 1934, op.cit.,* p.67.

186. *Mission Report,* 1934, p.48

187. Interview - Jessie Jacob

caste or depressed caste, and more especially the depressed caste, was highlighted and stressed by the Medical Mission. Dr. Pollard, for instance, refused to make any distinction between caste and out-caste patients, and thus an advantage was provided to the outcastes. In the Report for 1924, Dr. Pollard wrote: "... About that woman, you see she finds it rather difficult to come in to see you because she is a caste woman; 'oh', said I , 'tell her it doesn't matter a bit, we treat all sorts of people here'".[188] This way, while providing an advantage to the outcaste, the Medical Mission contributed to the breaking of the myth of the caste people that they were superior to the outcastes. Walter's observation is relevant here. He says Medical Mission "... has done a great deal to show up the cruelty, unreasonableness, and inhumanity of this attitude towards those who were helpless and in mind." [189]

In sum, the Medical Mission contributed to the psychological girding up of the movement of the Dalits.

6. LMS Christians and Kuravars

The LMS Christians' contribution to the Dalits included their services to the criminal tribe called the Kuravar community. The Kuravars were a Dalit community. [190] Some LMS Christians, both Missionaries and locals, devoted most of their time to the reclamation of Kuravar community. They treated their work among Kuravars as a special work, and hence we deal with it separately in this section. In this connection, some important questions raised are: who were the Kuravars? What was so special about them? What did the LMS Christians do for the Kuravars? What was their

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188. *Mission Report,* 1924, p.52.

189. Walters, *India through my Eyes, op.cit.,* p.51.

190. G.O. No: 2018, PW & L (1927) 12.9.1927, p.8 reads:
"In partial modification of G.O. No.117, Law (Gen) dt. the 12th Jan 1926, the Government direct that applications for educational concessions on behalf of converts from depressed classes to Christianity who are in criminal Tribes Settlements should be dealt with by the Commissioner of Labour and not by the Department of Education"..

All depressed classes fell within the scope of Labour Department.

motive? What were the consequences of this involvement with the Kuravars? Which/who of the LMS Christians related themselves with Kuravars? Did the LMS Christians do this work alone or did they involve other agencies also?

a) The Kuravars:

The Kuravars were a depressed class or Dalit Community. There were different types of Kuravars, namely Monda Kuravars or Monda Gollars. [191] Melnad Kuravars[192] and Uppu Kuravars. [193] These Kuravars professed no particular calling, though they generally worked as agricultural labourers. They were thieves by tradition and it was generally acknowledged that they lived mainly by that means. [194] Some of them had the practice of stealing sheep. [195] The Mission Report for 1926 mentions this: "...The Kuravar is expected to steal, and if he does not, the people all believe he does." [196]

The Report for 1924 goes further in relating other details:

> work among Kuravar had been carried on... These people are a troublesome tribe to handle... There are about 15,000 in the Salem District and their hereditary profession is making a living out of robbery and generally by breaking the laws of God and man. [197]

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191. G.O. No. 342, Judicial, 27.6.1924, p.2. (Dharmapuri Taluk)
192. G.O. No: 1202, Judicial, 26.10.1922, p.3. (at Attur and Salem)
193. Govt. of Madras Judicial Dept (Police) Index, 1924, p.8
194. G.O. No.342, Judicial, *loc.cit.*, p.1
    See also: G.O. No. 154, Judicial, 1926, 10.3.1926.
    See also: G.O. No. 342, Judicial, 1924, 27.6.1924.
    See also: G.O. No. 646, Judicial, 1924, 10.12.1924.
    See also: G.O. No. 549, Judicial, (police) 1924, 31.10.1924
    cf: Goodall, *A History, op.cit.*, p.78
195. G.O. No. 646, Judicial, *loc.cit.*, p.4
196. *Mission Report*, 1926, p.47.
197. *Mission Report*, 1924, p.49.

Although Kuravars were classified as Dalits[198] yet, they were not outcastes.[199]

b) LMS ideology in their work among Kuravars:

LMS Christians in the Salem and Attur area treated Kuravars as their special object because, as Rev. W.J. Hatch, puts it:

> Their hereditary profession is making a living out of robbery and generally by breaking the laws of God and man. It is because of this that we cannot leave them to go their own ways. It is their very badness and troublesomeness which forces us to work among them and try to do something to bring them into a new way of life through Jesus Christ. [200]

The pioneer Missionary, who initiated work among the Kuravars, Rev. Robinson, did not say anything as to the motive of his work among them. It was Hatch, who followed the pioneers in the field, who gave an explanation for their involvement. Kuravars broke the laws of God and man. They made a living out of stealing which is prohibited in Christianity. When the LMS Christians came into contact with the Kuravars, they were appalled by their sinful ways and lostness, and tried to exercise their evangelical and theological inspirations to restore or reclaim them. In otherwords, their motive was to convert the Kuravars[201] from their old ways to bad living and restore them to a new and meaningful existence. They were people, children of God. The Kuravar too, as under-dogs, had worth in them. This ideological conviction of the LMS Christians, which has been described above,

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198. G.O. No.2018, PW & L (1927) 12.9.1927, p.8 - Kuravars lived in criminal Tribe settlements.

199. *Mission Report*, 1921, p.52, reads: "...the Kuravars, or thief caste curiously enough of higher rank in the caste system than the honest panchamas." cf: Goodall, *A History, op.cit.*, p.78

200. *Mission Report*, 1924, p.49

201. Conversion here is understood to mean not simply change of religion or converting to another religion, but also means change of one's ways of life, character, ie. a change of total personality, acceptable both to God and man.

was operative in their involvement with the Kuravars. This view was attested to by the Government which said in its order, referring to the Salem Kuravar work: "...The London Mission is engaged in the reformation of the Kuravars." [202] All that the LMS Christians sought to do was to reform the character, the person and the life of the Kuravars,[203] and in this process, they called their efforts, with all justification, "Conversion". The LMS Christians were applying their religious convictions in their work among Kuravars. This motive, of the LMS Christians, was emphasised by some in the later period. For instance, Rev. T. Narasimhan in his letter to the Governor of Madras wrote about the work among Kuravars at Attur thus:

> work amongst the Kuravars in Attur Taluk, through the Settlement, during the last four years, has made some appreciable progress... Settlements are only preliminary to something bigger and better.. our aim should be to give the Kurava boys such general, cultural, and mental equipment, coupled with some practical vocational training, in a rural environment, as will enable most of them later on in life, to make an honest living, under village conditions.[204]

In other words, character building of the Kurava pupils seems to have been the aim of his involvement. Make Kuravars new beings, honest and capable of living in harmony with others in society. This was his emphasis. From all this, the motive of the LMS Christians' involvement with the Kuravars becomes clear. Their motive was to make Kuravars new beings, reform their character and enable them to lead a decent and respectful life. Changing their fallen image — criminal", "thief" etc, - into the original image, was central to their motivation.

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202. G.O. No: 2242, PW & L (1927) 3.10.1927
203. *Mission Report,* 1921, p.52, reads: "...The Kuravars... are changing for the better in character and ways of life".
204. G.O. No. 966, PW :& L (1928) 2.4.1928

c) LMS Christians' service to Kuravars at Salem

What did LMS Christians do for the Kuravars? The first LMS Christian to associate himself with Kuravars was Rev. Robinson. With Robinson, the Salem movement for the redemption of the Kuravars began in Salem jail. [205] He formed two settlements for Kuravars at Sukkampatti and Muttampatti near Salem in 1907.[206] These two were the oldest Kuravar settlements and in 1908, they contained 82 people. In these settlements Robinson built schools, assisted with the reconstruction of their village life, and gave them catechists and teachers.[207] Robinson retired in the year 1909, barely two years after he started this work, and the Salem Kurava work was passed on to Ralph Robertson. [208] The Deputation of 1914 remarked about the two settlements thus: "... Some sections of this tribe have put themselves under the care of London Mission and they have been placed in two settlements in order that they might be brought under influence of civilization and of Christianity."[209] After seeing the success of voluntary colonies for Kuravars, the Government offered to LMS the care of a much large settlement of Kuravars, and wanted the LMS to put a Missionary in charge to conduct schools for the children and to exercise a civilising and moralising influence upon the adult population during their leisure hours.[210] Thus, LMS Christians began to interact with the Government in their work among Kuravars. This interaction continued to bear fruit throughout the period of our study.

A number of educational benefits began to come from the Government to the Kuravar pupils through the LMS Christians.

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205. Whitney, *Hundred Years, op.cit.*, p.59
206. *Ibid.*
207. Goodall, *A History, op.cit.*, p.78
208. *Report of the Deputation to India*, Oct.1913-March 1914, London, LMS, 1914, p.18(hereafter cited as *Deputation Report 1914*) cf. Whitney, *Hundred Years, loc.cit.*, p.68
209. *Deputation Report 1914, loc.cit.*, p.118
210. *Deputation Report 1914, op.cit.*, p.119

Rev. W.J. Hatch came to Salem in 1916,[211] and worked along with Robertson. Robertson was transferred to Coimbatore in 1921. Hatch was asked by the Mission in response to Government's plea for a missionary for the Kuravars, to cater to the needs of the Kuravar community. Hatch's service to the Kuravars was a sustained and useful one. He continued to procure help from the Government for Kuravars. In 1926, he suggested to the Government of Madras, "... that a few selected pupils from the settlement schools subsidised by the Labour Department may be taken over to the Boarding school for proper training and applies sanction of Boarding grants to enable him to do so" [212] The Government sanctioned the grant and thus Hatch brought a select number of Kurava pupils to the Salem Boarding school for better treatment and to impart higher education. Two out of seven Kurava boys thus brought to Boarding school, in 1927, won prizes for scripture. [213] In the effort to help Kurava pupils, not only Rev. Hatch, but also Mrs. Hatch exercised a strong influence. [214] Along with these Missionaries, local Christian teachers and catechists also helped Kurava boys grow educationally, morally and spiritually. The important contribution, apart from character building, of LMS Christians to the Kuravars was that they helped the Kuravars to realize how important it was for them to educate their children. Not only boys, but also Kuravar girls were taught in settlement schools and the Boarding school at Salem. The Report for 1928 reads: "... members of the Christian Kuravars in one of the Settlement brought in their daughters, deciding that it was necessary for the girls to have education as well as the boys. These girls have proved industrious and trustworthy". [215] The moral influence of the LMS Christians seems to have had a strong impact on the Kuravar pupils lives. The Kuravars in settlement forsook their old thieving habits and a real change

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211. Goodall, *A History, op.cit.*, p.79
212. G.O. No.1098, PW & L (1926) 26.8.1926, p.1
213. *Mission Report*, 1927, p.55
214. *Mission Report*, 1921, p.52
215. *Mission Report*, 1928, p.57

seems to have occurred in their lives, for the Report for 1929 states: "... It is a significant fact that some of the people wish to drop the title of Kuravar altogether and be known simply as Christians."[216] Thus, these Kuravars were not taking another label simply to change religion; a change of life seems to have coincided with the change of religion.[217]

Apart from imparting education and attempting to generally civilize the life of the Kuravars, the LMS Christians helped the residents of the settlements to improve their agriculture. They introduced the iron-plough and sugar cane planting. Agricultural classes were conducted and the simplest principles and the most practical methods of cultivation were explained. In this way it was made possible for those in the settlements to earn their own livelihood. [218] In addition, instruction in hygeine and cleanliness was given and temperance crusades were undertaken in the settlements.

d) Work among Kuravars at Attur

While work among Kuravars progressed at Salem, a similar work was begun at Attur in the early part of the 1920's. This coincided with the arrival of the Indian pastor, Rev. T. Narasimhan,[219] at Attur in 1921.[220] The Salem work and success undoubtedly inspired work for Kuravars at Attur. Rev. Robinson was Narasimhan's guru. That and also the influence of Hatch motivated Narasimhan to work among Kuravars.[221] Narasimhan was the

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216. *Mission Report,* 1929, p.59. See also: Mission Report, 1930; p.60.
217. Phillips, *Secretarial Report 1934, op.cit.,* p.66
218. Phillips, *Outcaste's Hope, op.cit.,* p.57
See also: Popley, *Village goes, op.cit.,* p.26
219. Rev. T. Narasimhan was one of the first batch of students when the new UTC was opened at Bangalore. cf. Whitney, *Hundred Years, op.cit.,* p.74
220. *Mission Report,* 1922, p.109
221. Interview—Sambaiah.

guiding spirit and leader of the Attur Kuravar community as much as Hatch was to the Salem Kuravars. [222]

The work among Kuravars at Attur seems to have been started as early as 1922 or 1923. For when the collector of Salem, Hilton Brown, visited the settlements in December 1924, the work had commenced. R.H. Ellis, the Labour Commissioner also visited Attur in 1925. [223]

This suggests that work among Kuravars at Attur was started almost as soon as Narasimham went there, though preliminary spade work could have been done either by Robinson or Hatch, who were stationed at Salem. [224] Narasimham gave much attention to the settlement and made it a model one. This is evident in a letter of the Labour Commissioner, who wrote:

> I visited the settlement... and was very pleased to see such good progress being made. It should become a model settlement in course of time. Mr. Narasimhan evidently takes the greatest interest in it. [225]

In 1925 a piece of land was secured from the Government at what became known as Kaliyanagiri, near Ettapur, and by 1926 the people had built their houses upon it. [226] In 1928 Narasimhan appealed to the Governor or Madras for a grant to establish a Boarding House and agricultural Farm for Kuravar boys at Attur.[227] This letter reveals the vision this LMS Christian had for the upliftment of Kuravars and his comprehensive understanding of

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222. Goodall, *A History, op.cit.*, p.79, says: "... subsequent to this pioneer work of Robinson, more work of similar kind was undertaken, largely in Collaboration with the Madras Government. A great name in this connection was that of the Brahmin convert, T.Narasimhan, who established new settlements at Attur." cf. *Mission Report*, 1930, p.61
223. G.O. No. 966, PW & L (1928) 2.4.1928, p.4
224. Sambaiah agreed with this position.
225. G.O. No.966, PW & L, (1928) 2.4.1928, p.4
226. Whitney, *Hundred Years, op.cit.*, p.75
227. G.O. No. 966, PW & L, *loc.cit.*, p.1-2.

their need. The programme he had outlined would challenge a present day community development officer. He suggested land and irrigation facilities for the settlers, and, keeping in mind the illiteracy of the Attur rural population, he stressed adult education. As a part of rural reconstruction he suggested co- operative societies and responsible citizenship. He also asked for a library for Attur. Government accepted his requests because the programme suggested was comprehensive and had clarity and purpose. It sanctioned a grant of Rs. 9,000 for 1928-29 for the maintenance of the Boarding Home and agricultural Farm. [228] The significance of this work also relates to the fact that a Brahmin convert, inspired by LMS Missionaries, was working among, with and for Dalits such as Kuravars. In 1929 new building Homes, with the grant received from the Government,[229] were built. Thus, Rev. and Mrs. Narasimham contributed significantly to the reclamation of Kuravars at Attur. [230] In 1930, there were, apart from the agricultural farm, four adult schools at Attur, three schools for Kuravars, two specially for Dalits and four mixed schools for caste children and untouchables, under the supervision of the Narasimhans. [231] Narasimhan retired in 1943, after many years of devoted service to the Dalits at Attur, and his devotion to his work brought forth citations from the LMS Board and the Government.[232]

e) Consequences of LMS Christians' work among the Kuravars

If the LMS Christians, as pointed out earlier in this section, involved themselves with Kuravars in order to make them new

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228. G.O. No: 96€, PW & L, (1928) 2.4.1928, p.1-28

229. *Mission Report*, 1930, p.61

230. *Mission Report*, 1931, p.73. See also: Whitney, *Hundred Years op. cit.*, p. 76.

231. *Mission Report*, 1930, p.61

232. Letter to Narasimham from the LMS Board of Directors, dt. 16th Dec, 1943. Letter from Chirgwin, LMS General Secretary, dt. 20th Dec., 1943.
Letter from Norman Goodall, India Foreign Secretary, dt. 17th Dec., 1943

beings, with character, morality and so on, then according to Mission Reports and other sources, the work among Kuravars was a success.

The LMS Christians wanted to rebuild the broken image of the Kuravar, and make him a man, a man of character and dignity acceptable to God and to humanity. They had liberated the theiving, criminal and demoralised Kuravar community. By providing educational facilities, LMS Christians liberated the Kuravars from illiteracy, debasement and ignorance, and helped elevate them socially. Besides, they helped the Kuravars, a wandering nomadic community, to settle down and earn their livelihood in a decent and honest manner.

To measure the quantum of service rendered by The LMS Christians to the Kuravars and the ultimate impact upon them is difficult. Yet, there is some evidence. According to the Report for 1933, one Kuravar young man became a master in the High School, another was working as a master in a Government school, and one worked as a compounder at Tripattur ashram.[233] Phillips quoted a young Kuravar teacher who thanked him, "... for all that you have done for my people"[234] Whitney said that "... Some of the Kuravar lads have been educated and hold responsible positions as teachers and otherwise outside their villages, while those who remained earn their living honestly by cultivating the soil."[235] After visiting Attur during his Secretarial visit, Phillips wrote: "...In the work for the Kuravars as well as in the uplift of the outcastes the Christian religion in once again demonstrating its powers to lift up the fallen."[236] Even if quantitative measurement were possible any effort to measure the contribution of the LMS Christians should be made on the basis of the total impact exercised on the community under consideration.

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233. *Mission Report,* 1933, P.51.
234. Phillips, *Back to India, op. cit.,* p.40
235. Whitney, *Hundred Years, op.cit.,* p.61
236. Phillips, *Secretarial Report, op. cit.,* p.66

7. LMS Christians' contribution to the Dalit women:

The fourth important contribution of the LMS Christians to the Dalits in the Tamil Field was their service to the women among them. The Dalit women in the Erode, Salem, Coimbatore and Attur areas, as elsewhere, were superstitious, ignorant, illiterate and lived in utter poverty under unsanitary conditions. Most of the Mission Reports which make reference to this subject, support this view. The LMS Christians responded to these conditions of the Dalit women with a view to transforming their life into a better one. The LMS women missionaries took up this responsibility as a special one in the initial years, and eventually local LMS Christians also took an active part, in redeeming women from their debased condition. Their work among women included education, evangelism and medical service.[237]

This section deals with some questions such as: why did LMS Christians undertake this work? who did what and where? what were the consequences of LMS Christians' work among the Dalit women?

a) Ideological reason for women's work:

First of all, why did LMS Christians' involve themselves in women's work? As pointed out elsewhere, the LMS Christians were interested in uplifting the Dalits as a whole, which included not only men and children, but also women. Hence they had an obligation to women also. One could say that the LMS Christians were interested in evangelism, and in this enterprise they found the women of the villages a stumbling block, so they initiated work among them.[238] But that is one perspective. Another is that the LMS Christians were interested in Dalit women because they wished to liberate them, give them enlightenment and enable them to enjoy a respectful position in the society. Phillips described what Christianity could do for women, and highlights the reason for LMS

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237. Phillips, *Outcastes Hope, op. cit.*, p. 125

238. Phillips. *Outcaste's Hope, op. cit.*, p.125.

Christian's involvement with them. He said, "... When you export to a country the religion of Christ, you are sending that which in the long run will bring liberation, enlightenment, and respectful treatment to all the women of that country."[239] This clearly indicates that LMS Christians were not interested in women simply for the sake of converting them. At least they understood conversion to involve freeing them from age old tyranny, superstition, ignorance and their subservient state. Because the women played a subservient role in the family, and in the society, they were not able to live a respectful life. As individuals they too should be given the opportunity to reconstruct their life situation. LMS Christians, in the Tamil Field, seem to have had this ideological motivation.

b) Women's Work in the Tamil Field

The LMS christians' work among Dalit women in Salem, Erode, Attur and Coimbatore areas began in the last quarter of the 19th century. Since about the 1890's the Board adopted the policy of sending single women Missionaries to develop women's work.[240]

It was at Salem that women's work was first initiated in the year 1891 by Lois Ainsley Cox. [241]At Coimbatore the longest spell of women's service was given by Annie Grierson, who had been appointed there in 1898. [242]In the Erode area the women's work was started at the dawn of the 20th century by Jessie W. Inglis. In the Attur area, Mrs. Narasimhan was involved in this work, but the origin of women's work there is not known. [243]The pioneers seem to have concentrated on starting schools and Boarding Homes for village girls. [244]Thus, in the beginning educational work took precedence over other types of women's work.

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239. Phillips, *Missionary's Job, op. cit.,* p.55
240. Whitney, *Hundred Years, op. cit.,* p.46
241. *Ibid.*
242. Goodall, *A History, op. cit.,* p.81
243. Interview-Sambaiah.
244. Whitney, *Hundred years, loc. cit.,* p.47.

Women's work at Salem and Attur

In the Salem Area, Cox initiated work among women but she could not continue her work because of ill-health and she died in 1892. During the short period of her stay at Salem, Cox opened schools for girls at Ponnamupet, Gogai, Ammapet and Kitchipalayam.

In these schools she employed ten teachers and 203 girls studied in them. She also employed two Bible women, and superintended the work of a third at Yercaud, and held a class for Christian women on Saturday mornings in the church.[245] The second Missionary who came to assist Cox in 1891 was Annie Crouch, who subsequently took Cox's place. She was joined by Margaret Lodge in Dec. 1892. These pioneers educated girls and, with or without Bible women, contacted women in the villages. They interested themselves in impressing upon the village women the need for giving education to their daughters. The schools and Boarding schools they started were to make this possible. As Phillips points out,[246] one reason for starting schools and Boarding Homes was that when the girls were educated and went back to their villages, they in turn became educators of their relatives. According to the Report for 1921, the Salem Boarding School for girls had a record of 45 women teachers among its old girls, and there was a beginning of efforts to prepare girls for nursing training.[247]

In the Salem girl's Boarding School education was given to the daughters of Christians living in the panchama or depressed

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245. Whitney, *Hundred Years, op. cit.*, p.46

246. Phillips, *Outcaste's Hope, op. cit.*, p.125 reads:
"... They are the training grounds for Christian wives and mothers, and for Bible women. An adequate number of trained and educated catechists wives and Bible women would go far to solve the problem of women's work in the villages, for they would be able to do for women of their village what the catechists are doing for men-besides the very important work of setting an example of Christian home life."

247. *Mission Report*, 1921, p.54

classes villages.[248] The aim was to provide suitable education for these girls, which would not unfit them for ordinary village life. LMS Christians who did women's work always kept in mind the rural background of their girls, and so at Salem, the Boarding school had a farm where girls were trained in agricultural work. They were taught nature study also. Twice a day they did field work in the farm.[249] Boarding schools for girls not only made them knowledgeable, but also refined their character.[250] In 1934 Phillips, after a visit to the Salem girls boarding Home, observed:

> Life is more interesting than it used to be, for now they live in "families", each with its own little house and kitchen, get a weekly allowance from the matron do their own bazaaring and cooking...the older girls share in the cultivation of a big piece of land on which is grown most of the grain and vegetables which the boarding home consumes.[251]

Thus, girls who came to get education in the Boarding School at Salem were helped to relate their rural situation, in character building and in home administration.

Bible women worked among village women in Salem area, but it is difficult to identify them. Mission Reports gave the names of women missionaries only. In the Salem area, Bible women managed to send at least ten to twelve girls to the Boarding Home from the villages, in which they worked. [252]The role of Bible women included not only teaching New Testament or Bible stories but also the teaching village women to read and write. [253]Another feature of women's work in Salem area was the Summer Schools conducted by LMS Christians. These Schools were conducted at different centres. In them, the village women stayed for a period

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248. *Mission Report,* 1924, p.49
249. *Ibid.*
250. Walters, *India through my Eyes, op. cit.,* p. 36
251. Phillips, *Back to India, op.cit.,* p.38
252. *Mission Report,* 1924, p.51
253. *Mission Report,* 1929, p.60

of three weeks, and were taught singing, Bible stories, hygeine, baby welfare, sewing and lessons on the management of a Christian home.[254]

In the Attur area women's work was done by Mrs. Narasimhan.[255]

2) Women's work at Coimbatore:

In the Coimbatore area, the women's work commenced with Grierson in 1898. Women's work here also included schools and boarding homes for girls, and in the town there was a strongly developed women's work. [256]In 1919 Coimbatore had two women missionaries and ten Bible women. The Bible women there played a vital role. The Report for 1924 states, "... The nine Bible women in Coimbatore have tried a new plan of going two by two in one afternoon each week-house by house, street by street, throughout the town." [257]The work of the LMS women Christians in Coimbatore comprised a boarding home for girls, a school on the compound, chiefly for the education of Christian girls, four non- residential girls schools in the town, the work of eight Bible women, summer schools, district work and so on. [258]In the Coimbatore Boarding School also, training of character was emphasised. [259]

3) Women's work at Erode:

In the Erode area, the work among women was pioneered by Jessie W. Inglis. [260]About her, Goodall says, "...Jessie Inglis (later Mrs. Brough) possessed great gifts of mind and spirit, and her work

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254. Phillips, *Back to India, op. cit.*, p. 35
255. Sambaiah.
256. *Mission Report,* 1936, p.41.
257. *Mission Report,* 1924, p.52
258. *Mission Report,* 1930, p.65
259. Phillips, *Secretarial Report 1934,* op. cit., p.68
260. Mrs. Jessie Jacob thinks she could have been named after Jessie Inglis. See also: *Deputation Report 1923,op. cit.*, p.214-215.

amongst the women of the area was of singular quality." [261]In 1919 Erode had seven Bible women and one woman missionary devoted to women's work.[262] Inglis had more access to the villages in Erode area.[263] She had given remarkable service to the women at and around Erode and even as early as 1921, the Report said, the work among women had improved their condition.[264] At Erode also women's work included Boarding schools for girls, day schools, summer schools and so on.

The Boarding Home for girls at Erode, as elsewhere, was always managed with the villages in view and Inglis developed simple industrial training such as basket-making and mat-making.[265] In the girls Boarding Home there were 70 inmates for most of the year. Summer schools for two months were conducted for village women. In 1930, two summer schools were conducted. In about forty congregations daily or weekly classes were held for the women with a total of several hundreds of pupils.

At nights also classes were conducted for those women who returned from their field work.[266] Zenana work among Mohammedan women was regularly carried on by the Bible-women. In 1931, The LMS Christians involvement in women's work covered 120 villages.[267] That year, a summer school was conducted for several weeks and the report says, "...most of them were able to read their Bibles by the time they left"[268] In 1932 also a summer school was conducted and women who participated in it "learned that which should make them missionaries in their turn to their

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261. Goodall, *A History, op. cit.*, p.84
262. *Mission Report*, 1919, p.91
263. *Ibid.*, p.26
264. *Mission Report*, 1921, p.53
265. *Deputation Report 1914, op. cit.*, p.126
266. *Mission Report*, 1930, p.63
267. *Mission Report*, 1931, p.74
268. *Ibid.*

village sisters."[269] In 1939, the Erode area had five women missionaries and twenty six Bible women.[270]

The women's work in the Tamil Field included Medical work also.

The Erode hospital was a boon to the village women. LMS Christians in the hospital continuously visited villages, and taught personal cleanliness, hygeine and sanitation. A programme of health education was carried on in the villages.[271] In the Coimbatore and Salem areas also LMS Christians were able to provide general health education, although in those areas there was no qualified medical missionary, except Mrs. Hatch who was stationed at Salem.[272]

Thus, work among the Dalit women in the Tamil Field included education, Evangelism and medical service. Through their work among women, LMS Christians highlighted the importance of emancipating the dalit women. They were able, through their work, to give a sense of self-respect to the Dalit women. They also liberated them from their ignorance and illiteracy, unhygenic conditions, and helped them to learn a trade and assisted them in home economy and thriftiness. Through boarding schools, LMS Christians trained village girls in such a way that was suited to their village conditions. The girls were trained to be Bible-Women, good housewives and "Missionaries" to their village sisters. In summary, the LMS women Christians who worked among women in the Tamil Field, were interested in liberating the Dalit women of the villages from all those situations which dehumanized them.

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269. *Mission Report*, 1932, p.54
270. *Mission Report*, 1939, p.80
271. Popley, *Village goes, op. cit.*, p.28
272. Phillips, *Quest, op. cit.*, p.74

8) The LMS Christians and Rural Reconstruction among the Dalits:

The LMS Christians' attempt to uplift the Dalits did not stop with education, medical service etc. All these were designed to serve a larger end, the reconstruction of rural communities, In the Tamil Field, most of the converts came from the Dalit background and as noted elsewhere in this study, such village communities invariably became Christians in groups. This was especially true in the Erode, Salem and Attur areas. Education was imparted by LMS Christians in such a way as to suit the rural life. Through the Medical Mission, disease and superstitions were reduced. But such activities were parts of a larger vision,—that of creating ideal village communities.

In 1919 Salem (which at that time included Tripattur also) had 35 outstations which were mostly village centres, Erode had 78 villages centres, and Coimbatore just then made a beginning in the rural areas.[273] Apart from these village centres, there were settlements established by Government for the Dalits.[274] In certain areas, moreover, the LMS Christians themselves were able to secure from Government large grants of land, with a view to providing settlements for the Dalits.[275]

a) Ideological reason for Rural Reconstruction:

In the involvement of LMS Christians with the Dalits, the theological and ideological orientation which had been discussed above was operative in their attempt to reconstruct villages. Their concern was not only to save the Dalit for heaven but also "...to work for the uplift-religious, moral, social and economic, of the men and women and children in hundreds of villages, who have come to us from the outcastes"[276] In the conviction that the Dalits

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273. *Mission Report*, 1919, p.91
274. Popley, *Village goes, op. cit.*, p.25
275. *Deputation Report 1923*, op. cit., p.192
276. Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, op. cit.*, p.122

should become self-reliant and live like others, the LMS Christians worked for the reconstruction of rural life. Popley for instance, wrote:

> The aim of the work described here is the creation of a new village community, Christians in its way of living and inspired by the spirit and teaching of Christ; a community which will look up to Christ as its master and Lord, and find in Him its power for redemption from old evils and for the transformation of its life Such a community must be self-reliant...and made up of men and women who are ready and able both to support themselves and the work of the church in their midst.[277]

b) Features of Rural Reconstruction

The Rural Reconstruction programme envisaged by the LMS Christians included sanitation, agriculture, education, co- operative societies, etc. As early as 1912, according to phillips, LMS Christians were interested in introducing improved agricultural instruments and methods in the rural areas,[278] in order to help rural people earn their livelihood.

He wrote that:

> The Mission uses part of the land for model cultivation, introduces the iron-plough-share instead of the old-wooden one, plants sugarcane where the natives ahead never thought of doing so... when possible, agricultural classes are held at which. practical methods of cultivation are explained.[279]

The LMS Christians also helped Dalits to get long term loans for irrigation wells from the Government.[280] These services were offered to improve agriculture. But LMS Christians understood that more than this was needed. They not only developed lands for model cultivation, but also created model villages. Said Phillips:

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277. Popley, *Village goes, op.cit.*, p.19
278. Phillips, *Outcastes' Hope. op.cit.*, p.57
279. Ibid.

> Here and there villages have been persuaded to undertake plans to effect complete construction over a period of years. There are four in the K-division alone which should develop into model villages—within a few years we expect to find rows of neat well-built brick cottages, each with its garden, cattle shed and latrine—an example to all passers by of what a village should be like.[281]

"Cleaning up the Village" was a part of the rural reconstruction introduced by the LMS Christians.[282] The Deputation of 1923 explained what the rural reconstruction programme meant to the Dalits thus: "... In its orderliness and cleanliness and in the radiant happiness to be seen in the faces of the people, the importance of our meeting presented a striking contrast to the heathen villages about."[283]

Talk about rural reconstruction became widespread, after the establishment of the community school at Erode, in the latter part of the '30's.[284] The rural reconstruction programme of the LMS Christians was a very comprehensive one, which converted the entire village community and covered all aspects of its life. The Medical Mission played a vital role in removing unsanitary conditions in the villages.

The Erode and Herbert Memorial Hospital at Chennimalai and inumerable mission agents advised villagers concerning the need for sanitation, hygiene and cleanliness.[285] They advised villagers to follow the instruction in Deutronomy 23:12-14.[286] Through education village illiteracy was reduced and agriculture was improved. Rural reconstruction also had other ways of helping the

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280. Popely, Village goes, op.cit., p.25-26
281. Phillips, *Quest, op.cit.*, p.75
282. Ibid
283. *Ibid.*, p.49
284. Walters, *Indian through my Eyes, op.cit.*, p.30
285. *Mission Report*, 1930, p.64. See also: Phillips, *Quest, op.cit.*, p. 74. Popely, *Village goes, op.cit.* p.23.
286. Phillips, *Back of India,op.cit.*, p.76

Dalits. The LMS Christians encouraged cottage and home industries such as weaving, carpet-making, the making of lace and embroidery, carpentry, printing and other businesses.[287] These ventures helped the Dalits to attain self-support. To remove village indebtedness, the LMS Christians introduced co-operative societies and or Banks.[288] Through co-operative societies, lessons in honesty and thrifty were taught.[289] In 1927, the LMS Agents co-operative society was founded at Erode.[290] In 1930, Erode had 34 co-operation societies. Popley points out that co-operative credit societies were established in most of the villages in the Erode area, and "... are a great help in the uplift of the people, ... the Societies are of great help to the people and provide them with money at easy rates of interest for cultivation expenses and other needs."[291] The Co-operative Societies were not usually established directly by the London Missionary Society, but as their success depended so much on unrightness of character and on public confidence, the local missionary or a leading Indian Christian were asked to play a large part in them.[292]

The LMS Christians, as a part of their work in rural reconstruction, interested themselves in fighting against the evil of drink also. In 1929. Rev. Hatch, of the Salem Mission area, was appointed Chairman of the Committee for Temperance propaganda by the Government of the Madras Presidency[293] In Coimbatore, Missionaries' evangelism included temperance teaching. [294] In the Erode area also there was a crusade against the evil of drink.[295]

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287. *Deputation Report 1923,op. cit.*, p.190.
288. Phillips, *Our Sixth Form, op. cit.*, p.23
289. Mission Report, 1929, p.62
290. *Mission Report*, 1927, P.55.
291. Popley, *Village goes, op.cit.*, p.26
292. Phillips, *Back to India, op.cit.*, p.76
293. *Mission Report*, 1930, p.60
294. *Ibid.*
295. Popely, *Village goes, op. cit.*, p.23.

Thus the LMS Christians in the Tamil Field worked for the reconstruction of rural areas, and their aim in such an enterprise was to create an ideal Community.

9) The LMS Christians Contributions to the Development of leadership and self-reliance among the Dalit Christians.

The LMS Christian's contribution to the Dalits also included their effort to create a strong leadership and a sense of self-reliance among the Dalit converts in the Tamil Field. The LMS did not want to keep the churches under its control indefinitely. Their concern was to establish a strong leadership and self-supporting churches—Churches which largely consisted of Dalits.[296] With this concern, they evolved a policy of devolution in the period under study. How did they go about doing this? In what sense did devolution help the Dalit Christians? when did Dalit Christians become leaders of their institution? These are some of the questions that are raised in this section.

a) A Policy of Devolution:

In 1919 the LMS declared its intention to give independence and authority to Indians in the Tamil Field.[297] What the society meant by independence and authority is not clear, for LMS missionaries, in the Tamil Field, were very much in control of mission affairs then. Whether independence and authority were granted or not, it is clear that at least in principle the LMS had committed itself to a policy of devolution. In 1919, except for the two schools at salem and Coimbatore, the rest of the church and related institutions were very much under the Missionaries. Perhaps this independence and authority, of which the records speak, refers to the LMS decision to give more local representation in the local and district councils.[298] So, while one cannot say that the LMS

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296. Phillips, *Doings and Dreams,op.cit.*, P.122

297. *Mission Report,* 1924, P. 21.

298. Walters, *India through my Eyes, op.cit.*, p.17,85,176.

actually granted autonomy to local Christians in 1919, it did establish the principle.

In 1919 there were 10 ordained local Christians. 27 unordained Indian preachers, 24 Bible Women and 251 Christian teachers in the Tamil Field.[299] T.D. Moses, James Ratna, S.J. Elijah, T. Narasimhan, S. Gnanamuthu, A. Samuel and D.P. Doraiswamy were the ordained local Christians who worked in the Coimbatore, Salem Erode and Attur areas. Inspite of the Principle of devolution, and inspite of the existence of 10 ordained clergymen, the affairs of the church were in the hands of the MIssionaries.[300] But in the spheres of evangelism and the running of educational institutions, local Christians were taken rather Seriously. In 1919 itself the Salem Church took up an evangelistic campaign warmly and the desire for giving was evident.[301] In 1921, the main Church at Erode, on its own went about doing evangelistic work without Mission help of any kind.[302] The Coimbatore Boy's High School was headed by P.J. Devasahayam,[303] and Sundaram headed the Salem High School.[304] Both were local Christians. In 1922, the responsibility for evangelistic work and elementary education was handed over to the Church Councils in which local Christians were represented in sizeable number.[305] Thus, only in 1922, did local Christians became partners, with their Mission counter-parts, in deciding the future policy and control of the Church and Church related institutions.

In such reconstituted Church Councils, local Christians were in the majority. Walters observed that:

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299. *Mission Report,* 1919, P.91
300. Narasimhan was given full charge only in 1922.
301. *Mission Reports,* 1919, P.25. 1921, P.9.
302. *Mission Report,* 1921, P.53.
303. *Mission Report,* 1920,P.31.
304. *Mission Report,* 1922, P.109
305. *Mission Report,* 1921, P.23

> The Indians were in the majority, and they took a keen and intelligent interest in the deliberations and often made wise and far-seeing proposals....Already a few Indian Christians are taking places of responsibility and authority in the Church.[306]

Although the London Mission did not come forward to implement the principle of devolution to local Christians until 1922, yet LMS Missionaries who were in the Tamil Field were particular that responsibility should be transferred to local Christians.[307] By 1923, Church meetings and Church Councils were presided over by local Christians.[308] and thus became responsible for policy decisions. In the congregations, the responsibility for the conduct of Sunday Service and the instruction of the people was invested with a panchayat of elders.[309] Indianization of musical instruments was encouraged. The use of Kalakshepam (discourse) in evangelism was introduced, and in this respect the contribution of H.A. Popely was significant.[310]. The use of lyrics was encouraged. The practice of removing footwear at the doorstep of the Church was introduced.[311]

b) A policy of developing local leadership

In 1926 the LMS came out with a much more definite policy in relating all its missionary activities to the development of the Indian Church.[312] It began to specialize in training Indian workers of every grade—village boys and teachers in Community and training schools at Erode and women teachers at Salem.[313] The

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306. Walters, *India through my Eyes, op.cit.,* P.17-18.
307. *Ibid.,* p. 18.
308. *Ibid.,* P.23
309. *Deputation Report 1923,op.cit,* P.85
310. Goodall, *A History, op.cit.,* p. 84 H.A. popley wrote a book on music— See: Herbert A. Popley, *The Music of India,* Madras, SPCK Press, 1921.
311. Walters, *India though my Eyes,op,cit.,* P.23.
312. Phillips, *Doings and Dreams, op, cit.,*P. 122.
313. *Mission Report,* 1928, P. 21.

aim was to provide leadership for the Churches and Schools. Although the LMS gave majority representation to Indian Christians in the Church councils and had them as partners in other related programmes, yet until 1927 the Indian Christians seem to have had the feeling that the society's Missionaries desired to keep control in their own hands.[314] The responsibility for self-propagation and self-support was devolved more or less fully to the local Christians. But the responsibility of self-government was still mainly exercised by the Missionaries.[315] Only in 1930, did local Christians become significantly involved in self-government at every level. [316]

However, in the field of medical missions, the Missionaries were is full control until 1934. Indian doctors and assistants had served at Erode even before 1934, but in the affairs of the Medical Mission they had very little voice. In 1935, Satya Joseph, a local Christian, became a member of the Medical sub-committee. In 1936, Narasimhan was on it. Only in 1942 was a second local Christian included in its composition, Rev. H. Sumitra, of Bangalore.[317]

That total devolution of responsibility for self-government did not take place until 1934 is also evident in the Secretarial Report of Phillips. He stated: ".. Tamil Church Council (Erode, Coimbatore, Attur and Salem areas) at present prefers the development of these local forms of service to asking the Mission to handover some branch of its operations throughout the whole area.[318] Only in the year 1938, did local LMS Christians assume full responsibility for self-government. [319]

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314. *Mission Report,* 1931, P. 46.
315. *Mission Report,* 1931, p.46
316. *Ibid.,* p.73
317. Minutes of Medical sub-Committee of the F & RC held on 25th July, 1942.
318. Phillips, *Secretarial Report 1934, op.cit.,* p.54
319. *Mission Report,* 1938, p.16-17

This section could give the impression that the LMS, although in principle committed to a policy of devolution, did not in practice give the responsibility to local Christians. Until 1938, a certain amount of paternalism was exercised by LMS Missionaries in the Tamil Field. But it should be remembered that even so the LMS was in advance of many other Mission societies in this respect. Also, the local Christians in question in the Tamil Field largely came from the Dalit communities. The LMS could not have simply given responsibility to local Christians because the local Christians came from Dalit origin and needed training in leadership. Hence, handover of responsibility to such people in 1919, would have been meaningless. Gradually, the LMS Missionaries trained local Christians, largely of the Dalit background, gave them education, refined their character, apprenticed them and saw to the total development of their personality. In this process of developing a strong local Christian leadership lies the strength of the LMS contribution to the Dalits. Paternalism was there, but was necessary, and appears justified in the light of the effort to develop a strong local leadership.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the Madras Presidency during the period between 1919 and 1939, there was a Dalit Movement. In order to change their status, the Dalits strove to establish a new order. As a step towards that new order, some converted to Christianity. Many of the Dalits in the Salem, Attur, Coimbatore and Erode areas chose, during this period to convert to Christianity. This was especially true in the Erode area.

During this period, many voluntary agencies and political organizations in the Madras presidency tried to uplift the Dalits. Of these, the actions of the Government and Christian Missions, on behalf of the Dalits, were the most extensive and enduring. There again, the Christian Missions seem to have been more effective than the Government, which did not and could not do much, although there was much talk about the Dalits. The Government was able to do very little for them directly. If this was true of the Dalits in general, the converts to Christianity benefited even less from Government programmes in so far as they were often excluded from their provisions. Of course, they did benefit from Government aid given to the Mission programmes. Thus Christian Missions became the main agency involved in programmes designed specifically to uplift the Dalits during the period under study. They were involved with them even in the 19th century, but in the 20th century, in the context of discriminatory policy of the Government towards them and, since conversion did not help the Dalits to move up economically and socially, the Christian Missions worked particularly for the uplift of the Dalits. Having come from the background of Evangelical revival, the Industrial and French Revolutions, the Christian Missionaries, in general, came with an ideological and theological bias in favour of the Dalits. They believed in the worth of all persons. They also believed that all were equal in the sight of God, and that equal opportunities must

be provided to all, especially to the members of the Dalits and Dalits converts, who were at the bottom rung of the society, to move up.

The converts to Christianity in the LMS Tamil Field mainly came from the Dalit communities such as Pariahs, Chucklers, Kuravars and so on. Although the LMS Christians placed emphasis on service to the Dalit converts, they did not forget the Dalits in general. They were convinced that their business, as God's representatives, was to establish a just social order which belonged to the "here and now" of the kingdom of God on earth. In exercising such convictions, they helped the Dalits in the Tamil Field, to know that they were truly human, born to be free and equal and that as persons, they too had worth. They gave hope to the Dalits to live a meaningful life and enabled them to become whole-beings. They enabled them to have a changed outlook about themselves and about their relationship to society. All the activities of the LMS Christians in the Tamil Field were directed towards this end. This their ideological contribution was their greatest contribution to the Dalits. Not only the converts, but also the Dalits in general, benefitted from the new perspective. Thus, the LMS Christians provided an ideological framework for the Dalit Movement as a whole.

The LMS Christians translated their ideological convictions into action in the form of a programme of education for the Dalits. Through numerous educational institutions—village schools, High schools, Boarding homes, community and Training Schools—the LMS Christians sought to give an education that befitted the rural context of the villages of the Dalits. Through their educational institutions, they tried to impart an education for life to the Dalits. Their education was directed towards the building up of character of the Dalit pupils and enabling them to serve their communities better.

They also sought to develop leadership for the Church and their other institutions, and in this process they produced leaders

who spearheaded the cause of the Dalits in the Madras presidency Legislature. The LMS Christians deliberately broke caste barriers in their educational institutions, and thus helped the Dalit pupils to an elevated position which equalled that of other caste pupils. Their educational programme was one of the most effective means through which the LMS Christians strengthened the movement of the Dalits.

One of the consequences of the Medical Mission of the LMS Christians was an affirmation of the worth of the members of the Dalit Communities. The Medical Missionaries not only alleviated the physical sufferings of the Dalits, but they also removed the caste distinctions in the hospitals and the villages, and enabled the Dalits to avail themselves of medical facilities. In creating a cadre of nurses from, and in imparting health education to the Dalit women, the LMS Christians helped them to escape the clutches of disease, and superstition. Thus, they helped liberate Dalit women. Not only through their medical Mission, but also through Women's work, the LMS Christians gave a sense of self-respect to the Dalit Women. Through such work, they liberated them from ignorance, illiteracy, and unhygeinic conditions, and from all their dehumanizing situations.

The contribution of LMS Christians to the development of a strong indigenous Church was commendable. Although they devolved responsibility for self-Government, self-propagation and self- support slowly and in stages, yet this was done, with a view to creating a well-trained, educated and charactered local Christian leadership. Thus, they created a strong local Church in the Tamil Field which was largely composed of Dalit Christians.

The attempt to construct new village communities of the Dalits through Rural Reconstruction programmes was also an important aspect of the LMS Christian contribution to the Dalits. They believed that Dalit converts had the right to live like other caste people. They also needed to live a transformed, free, uninhibited and enriched life. The LMS Christians implemented this conviction in their rural reconstruction programmes. Through their com-

prehensive rural reconstruction programmes, the LMS Christians helped the Dalit to avail themselves of improved agricultural methods and equipment, home and cottage industries, services of co-operative societies, and to refrain from the evil of drink, indebtedness and so on. In otherwords, in constructing new village communities, the LMS Christians sought the uplift-religious, moral, social and economic—of the men, women and children in hundreds of villages, who came to them from the Dalit Communities.

Thus, LMS Christians in the Tamil Field undergirded and strengthened the Movement of the Dalits in general. Also,the Christian church itself became an integral part of the Dalit Movement for social and economic justice.

POSTSCRIPT

This Postscript has become necessary for the following reasons: First of all, this work was attempted during 1981-1982 at the United Theological College, Bangalore, as a partial fulfillment for the Degree of Master of Theology (M.Th.) of the Senate of Serampore College/University. Thus, this work sees the light of day after roughly about 14 years. Several developments had taken place in between. When I left for Hamburg, Germany, for my doctoral research in 1984, I wished to work on one of the following topics:

1. LMS work among Dalits in the Madras Presidency 1919-1939.

2. Reformed Church of America Mission work and the conversion Movements in the present day Ambedkar District in Tamilnadu.

3. Madras Rethinking Group.

It was unfortunate, however, that I was informed there after a year or so that funds for my library research in England (LMS) or America (RCA) would not be available and that I could work on some other topic which would not involve visits related to research in other countries. It was in this context. I was encouraged to work on the EATWOT, the acronym for the Ecumenical Association of Third world Theologians. I had before me just two options: either accept to work on EATWOT or return home without fulfilling any purpose. In the given circumstances, I had to opt. for the first. Thus, I began my work on the EATWOT. The greatest difficulty I had encountered in working on EATWOT was to accept their critique of the Christian Missionary movement from the west. I am a third generation convert to Christianity, I was baptised by a Christian missionary from America. Rev. Dr. C.R. Wierenga of the RCA, I had my education in Christian Institutions, and I was ordained and sent for further studies by the Church.

However, I continued my research treating my whole work as a theological critique of the Western Christian theology.

The fruit of that research was later published by the Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, under the title: **EATWOT IN ASIA: TOWARDS A RELEVANT THEOLOGY**. This work, no doubt, has certain theological relevance for the mission of the Church in India and elsewhere. However, it seems that EATWOT does not have the last word on every thing. Away from the home country for three years meant losing touch with the developments in the Indian context. This even made some Christian Dalits in India to say that I have been ungrateful to and uncharitable in criticising the Christian Missionary Movement from the West, and therefore that I should not do Dalit theology. Ungrateful, I am not; uncharitable, perhaps yes, but then that criticism should be laid at the door of EATWOT because it is the "Christian" theologians, historians and others in it who made the EATWOT Charter. Here again, the Question needs to be raised as to whether the EATWOT reading is totally irrelevant and uncharitable? Finally, as to whether I qualify to do Dalit theology, all I can say is that my Dalit consciousness goes back to 1975.

I could return to the present work only after 1992. Going through this work once again, I found several relevant insights contained in it. This is the reason why I decided to publish it now. Both the works, I mean **EATWOT IN ASIA** and this work, taken together present more than one thorny historical issue. As I mentioned afore, the present work is relevant to the Christian community in India and to the emerging Christian Dalit theology. This work presents a few serious arguments against the contentions of the Third World theologians. To put it differently, it is this work which warranted **EATWOT IN ASIA**. I invite the readers to read both **EATWOT IN ASIA** as well as this work.

By way of contributing to the emerging Dalit theology, I want to deal with and highlight some of the following issues: First of all, certain images or perceptions about Dalits in the works of the

past need to be overhauled. One finds references to Dalits in the Census Reports as well as in the Missionary writings to say that they are people who tell lies, who drink, who are lazy, who are unclean etc., Whether these images are the correct images of Dalits and whether they help Dalits in the present-day context is a serious issue. As for lying, it is not simply a Dalit problem alone. Those who oppress, those who remain in control of things especially the so-called upper castes manipulate and spread orchestrated lies. As for drinking, stealing and defrauding, it needs to be mentioned that all of these are common among the upper strata also. There are more corruption cases at the Governmental level. Eg: Italy, scams in India etc. As for eating the meat of dead animals, it has to be said that all those who, whether the so-called high castes or low castes, eat the meat of animals, eat them only after making sure that they are dead. No one eats the meat of a live animal. Only animals do that and, Dalits are not animals. As for Dalits being lazy is not a correct imaging. Perhaps they are the most industrious people in India. Because Dalits are economically disadvantaged, and because they are involved in agriculture, they have to work hard and they do hard work. As regards Dalits being unclean, it has to be borne in mind that Dalits are forced to be involved in doing works which soil their body and clothes. Some of them carry the human excreta of others on their own heads! How can such people be expected to be clean at all times? As for drinking, it has to be said that drinking is a vice among all, whether young or old, Christian or non-Chrisitian, Black or White, man or woman, Dalit or non-Dalit. While we do not encourage drinking, we have to nevertheless speak for Dalits. Dalits do the most difficult, the most in-human jobs, eg., scavenging, rickshaw pulling, domestic help, cobbling, coolie work etc., i.e, jobs which require hard physical labour. Further, during my empirical investigation in some villages in Karnataka State I found out that the caste men think that they have free access to the women of Dalit origin. This, I am told, is a constant worry of any Dalit in the rural areas and that therefore, they take to drinking. As for Dalits being animists, it has to be said that, they have their own gods, rituals, prayers and spirituality.

That is, Dalits are not animists. It is in the light of the above that images about Dalits in the writings of the past and the present need to be critically looked at and overhauled.

Secondly, how does this work treat Dalits, as objects of missionary charity or as subjects? In other words, were the Dalits actors in their own right or were they acted upon? Some find academic satisfaction in raising this question. During 1919-1939 and even earlier, Dalits in general were subjects in their own right. Dalit leaders, especially in the Madras Presidency, were claiming space for Dalits in the Government, in the legislature and in the society at large. Those Dalits who converted to Christianity were helped with and trained by the Christian Missions and, by the end of 1939, Christian Dalits had assumed leadership at different levels in the Christian Church. So, the interaction between Christian missionaries from the West and the Christian Dalit converts was not altogether useless. The issue is not whether they were objects or subjects, but how the Dalit movement gained currency, who played what role in that and whether Christianity contributed to that movement or not. In other words, if Dalits took the initiative to convert, then they were the subjects! Thirdly, it is claimed that Dalits converted to Christianity for economic reasons, - for soap, soup and salvation and so, they were called "rice Christians" even by Gandhi, and this lable is even now affixed to the Dalit converts to Christianity. This again needs to be explained in context. Did Dalits, in general, convert to Christianity and Islam because of caste oppression? Historians will differ in answering that question. But , it can be looked at from the perspective of Dalits. Yes, it is true that some group conversions took place during famines in the second half of the nineteenth century and, more number of them converted to Christianity or Islam during the first half of the twentieth century. History shows that some Christian missionaries were not at all interested in accepting large groups for conversion during the famines; secondly, during the first half of the twentieth century, if Madras Presidency is taken as an example, there were Dalit movements which started to assert themselves and at the

national level, the struggle between Gandhi and Ambedkar was centered around the issue of the Dalit electorate getting protection politically which eventually came to be known as the "policy of protective discrimination;" thirdly, Dalits themselves took the initiative to convert to Christianity because they wanted a way out of the caste system which is the foundation of Hinduism (dharma, karma etc.,) if some historians are to be believed. Even if Dalits converted to Christianity for bread, butter and better life, there was nothing wrong in that. Conversion to Christianity was seen as an attempt on the part of the Dalits to move up or to find a way out of a religion which kept them in servitude for centuries. During my empirical investigation in five Dalit villages in Karnataka, it was found out that several Christian as well as non-Christian Dalits, especially Tamils and Telugus, remember to have emigrated to other parts because of famines and for employment purposes. While this might be true, what is playing truant is the fact that some do not have the consciousness that it was caste oppression which drove them out of their habitat. It was also found out, during my empirical investigation in a particular Christian Dalit congregation in Bangalore, that Christians in general, except Roman Catholics, abhor the practice of sporting 'tilak' or 'bindhi' or 'pottu' on the forehead as it is seen as a practice related to Hindu religious beliefs. Sporting 'pottu' or 'tilak' is seen as a return to the Hindu fold and therefore, there is a strong reaction against those Christians who sport 'pottu' or 'tilak' What is the historical truth about Dalit conversion? Dalits contend today that they converted to Christianity because of caste oppression. Fourthly, the issue of change in Christian missionary attitude during the first half of the twentieth century. Was there a change or shift in their attitude to Dalit converts? Missionary Conferrence Records show that Christian missionaries from the West started to evince keen interest in the Dalits, not because they simply wanted to convert them to Christianity, but because they say that they understood the Christian Gospel as relevant to emancipating the under-dogs namely, Dalits in India. Missionary strategy, can it be mentioned, also changed in the context of caste oppression becoming more and more a public

issue during the first half of the twentieth century in India? This is not to say that Christian Dalits worshipped/worship missionaries from the West and North Atlantic countries. Historical records clearly show that Dalits and other converts to Christianity were critical of missionary paternalism and imperialism. The converts' critical attitude to Christian missionaries also needs to be seen in a different light. Christian missionaries from the West and North Atlantic countries generally thought that Christian Dalits needed to be trained in leadership and therefore, they did not delegate leadership responsibilities up till 1936 or so. In this context, it is necessary to remember that there was an intermediary agent namely, "the caste converts" who acted as link between missionaries and the Dalit converts, and who played or brought about caste politics into the Church. The missionaries prized their caste converts is a known historical fact. For a long time up till the advent of group conversions to Christianity missionaries were obsessed with the idea that they could reach other segments of the Indian community through (converting) converts from the so-called high or upper castes. Could it be said that it is these first caste converts who were close to the Christian missionaries from the West and North Atlantic countries who stood to gain in every way and who prevented Dalit converts to have closer access to the missionaries? An analysis of the role of one of such first caste converts and his descendants, who through marriage alliances with other caste converts in other areas such as Vellore, Salem, Coimbatore, Tanjore, Tinneyvelly, Tirupattur, nagercoil, Andhra Pradesh etc., reveals the fact that the Christian household in south India was and is even now to some extent dominated by them. Thus, the role of all the first caste converts and people ordained or accepted as evangelists, leaders etc., from the caste converts section by the Christian missionaries needs to be critically looked at from the perspective of Christian Dalits who are the majority in the Indian Church today. The hermeneutical suspicion that we need to employ here is that the caste converts had used their proximity to the Christian missionaries from the West to their own advantage. This is how they managed to obtain secular and theological education and assumed leadership positions

in the Church and Church-related institutions at the expense of Christian Dalits.

Fifthly, some Christian Dalits have concluded that in the Church Union Movement only the caste converts and/or shudras took an active part because of their preeminent position they enjoyed by being close to the Christian missionaries from the west and that the Christian Dalits were sidelined in the process of Church Union. While this is true in most cases, yet it needs to be recognized that Christian Dalit leaders, especially in the LMS, Reformed and Methodist traditions/backgrounds, had played a crucial role in the earlier Church Union processes which took place in the first decade of the twentieth century. Even in the Church Union process after the World War I, a limited number of Christian Dalits had taken an active part. Thus, Christian Dalits' role in the Church Union process is not to be underestimated or forgotten.

Sixthly, the thorny issue of relationship between Christian missionaries from Europe and North Atlantic countries and their colonial counterparts from the same regions dominates the discussion both in the ecclesiastical and secular contexts even now. One identifies two major perspectives here. Those with the Third world perspective start reading history from the advent of colonialism and in this enterprise, they put accent on the close relationship that seemed to have existed between Christian missionaries from the west and the colonial powers, such of those do start the history of the Third World nations from the ancient times, but they emphasise however, more the historical consequences of colonialism in the Third World. Colonialism is something that had major drastic consequences for the Third World in all spheres is something that one would hesitate to dispute. But the problem in the perspective is the projection of the societies of the Third World to have been harmonious and ideal. This perspective holds that there was societal harmony in the countries of the Third World and that the ancient societies were harmonious, self-reliant etc. While this may be true in the case of some of the Third World countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean, Indian context of

the early centuries, however, seems to present a different picture, because the ancient world of India, it is rightly argued by some, was built on dharma, karma, caste and other paraphernalia. This perspective holds that Christian missionaries converted people to Christianity and treated them as objects of missionary charity. It can be argued that if the ancient Indian Society was harmonious, it was because the society had graded hierarchy and the oppression due to caste observance was ordered and strong. The other perspective holds that Dalits converted to Christianity in groups big or small because of the caste oppression. While the subaltern view can hold that perspective, there are some who point out that conversion of Dalits to Christianity occured during the famines and during the economic depression in the 1920s. The issue of Dalit conversion is yet to be resolved though Dalit historians/theologians seem to argue that conversions took place because of caste oppression. They seem to be nearer the truth.

Now, back to the issue of relationship between colonialists and Christian missionaries. Here again, one identifies divergence of views. There are people who hold, based on their own reading of history, that there was a close relationship between colonial powers and Christian missionaries. It is true that in several cases, Christian missionaries sought help from the colonial governments for their work or to assist among whom they had worked; some of them had been magistrates and even churches had the patronage of colonial military and civil superiors; thus, some church buildings were built with support or money from the colonial agents; some missionaries even opposed the colonial governments. It has to be mentioned here that the attitude of the colonial powers to the Christian enterprise was not a uniform one. There are others who put it differently thus; that colonial powers and Christian Missions mutually benefitted each other. There are some others who say that the theology of the Christian Missions was a handmaid of the colonial exploitation and that it helped exploitation of the Third World by the colonial powers. The issue here is: how far can the Christian missionaries from the West and North Atlantic countries

be identified with the colonial powers? Were they one because both segments came from the same European and American contexts or were they different? I think there is need to single out the Christian Missionary Movement, because they, among other things, brought, however oberrated it was, the Gospel of Jesus. However, it cannot be denied that the theology of the Christian Missions was individualistic, dichotomic and other-worldly and that there was cultural and religious imperialism. Did the theology that accompanied the Christian Missions domesticate the converts or liberate them? Did the Christian Missions, in spite of their theology, do something at all for their converts in the given context? These questions deserve consideration.

Seventhly, EATWOT has read history from the perspective of the Third World and therefore, the starting point for them was the beginning of colonialism in the Third World. On the other hand, Christian Dalits in India read history from their perspective starting from the nineteenth century, i.e., from their conversion experience or movement and the point of departure for them is caste oppression. This distinction needs to be borne in mind. A Third World perspective vis-a-vis First and Second Worlds may be legitimate to counter the economic dominance and political imperialism of the latter. But this perspective can and may marginalize other specific perspectives in specific regions such as the Dalit. Tribal etc. Thus, while a Third World perspective may be in order, there is need to recognize the relevance of specific perspectives in specific regions or contexts. One may even suggest that both these perspectives need to be kept in dialectical tension. In other words, Dalits hold a specific historical perspective which contradicts the Third World perspective. In other words, while EATWOT perspective is economic- political poverty and oppression, Dalit perspective is Identity- oriented. While the former critiques the missionary movement of the past, the latter holds the view that Christian missions helped them in and through their conversion movement. That is the difference between them.

Eightly, this is a work based on several non-missionary sources, though the main body is built on missionary sources. Therefore, the question is: how reliable are they? One would ask: after all a missionary like G.E. Phillips was later a Professor of Mission in Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham and Norman Goodall was closely associated with the International Missionary Council and therefore, one could argue that some such missionaries could have systematized some of their defences to boost the image of the Christian Missionary Movement much later. But the internal evidence is so convincing as detailed in this work that one cannot dispute the dedication that the LMS Christians had for the uplift of Dalits and the underdogs. Thus, there is need to distinguish between the goodwill and the dedication of the Christian missionaries and the consequences of the theology that was supportive of the colonial enterprise.

Ninethly, Dr. Frederick S. Downs, in the Foreword states that he, with others, rejoices because I moved back to history from theology. While I thank him for the Foreword again, I beg to differ with him, on this issue. I was and I am even now a student of history. Historical interpretations change as more and more facts are unearthed and perspectives are shaped in time and by people in context. The issue is where do you draw the line between historians and theologians? Is it possible to treat some one as 'Christian' because he/she is pro or favourably disposed towards Christian Missions perspectivewise or term him/her as 'Marxist' because one is critical of one's own tradition which is inclusive of the Christian Missionary enterprise? I criticise because *I belong to the tradition and without being critical, I hold the view that one will not be able to do God's Mission in context relevantly.* And, I am also a historian who struggles after the truth, who wrestles with evidence and who seeks objectivety.

Finally, the LMS Christians seem to have operated within the theological framework known as the kingdom of God. Kingdom, as they understood, is both; it is to come and it is already here. This study shows that Christian missionaries, in spite of their

individualistic theology, seem to have operated with the idea that they were involved in God's Mission in strengthening the Kingdom of God in the here and now. That is, can it be said that if their theology inhibited them and hindered their work because it was mostly concerned about the soul of the individuals and saving them for the other world, their work, confronted with the challenge of humanizing Dalits in context, had communitarian developmental perspectives? This is why they initiated industrial schools, ran orphanages, co-operative banks, community schools etc. The section on the Ideological contribution (chapter IV, 3) may be questioned by some and rejected by some others. But, if this were not true, then this ideological projection must have been the imagination of the LMS Christians! Related to this is the issue of Christian Mission today. The lessons from the past are not altogether useless. They help us or should help us in the present to do God's Mission relevantly in our own context. God's Mission, as of old, in the present also is especially directed towards the underdogs. As we stand at the threshhold of the twenty-first century, it is the Christian task to overcome contradictions, inconsistencies, competition and forge solidarity with all forces which stand for humanization of Dalits and others and work together to make the former Christian Missions' work a holistic one in the present-day context.

The Author

THE CONTEMPORARY DALIT ISSUES

Franklyn J. Balasundaram

Introduction

In this write-up, an attempt is made to delineate the contemporary Dalit issues. Such an attempt, it is believed, will help reflection and discussion to emerge among the concerned. Thus, this write-up is aimed at mobilizing opinion on Dalit issues and bringing about awareness.

There are people who are interested in raising issues which pertain to the Dalits. However, such are a negligent minority. These people are not just Dalits but also non-Dalits. This needs to be borne in mind. What follow below are not just the opinions and reflections of the writer alone. The views and the opinions of some of the eminent Dalit theologians, thinkers and ideologists are brought together here. The views and the opinions expressed are the result of empirical and involved study. Thus, the sources used here are both oral and written, Dalit and non-Dalit and, Christian and other sources.

As Prof. A.P. Nirmal, quoting Alexandria George and M.N. Srinivas, has pointed out, "no adequate account of 'Societal scenario in contemporary India' could be given unless one took a serious note of the Dalit issues" (Nirmal, "Struggles for Identity among the oppressed/marginalised", Scholar's Forum on Contemporary Issues, UTC, 1991). So much so, Dalit issues are vitally important not just for Dalits only, but also for all in the contemporary Indian society.

It needs to be pointed out that Dalit issues arise out of Dalit reality. Therefore, in this write-up, a sketch about the Dalit reality is attempted in the first part and its is followed by a section on Dalit Issues in the second part. A sketch about the Dalit reality is necessary because Dalit issues arise out of the former. In other words, Dalit reality and Dalit issues are inseparably intertwined. Thus, we begin with the Dalit reality.

Dalit Reality

How do Dalits see themselves? What is the Dalit reality? We shall begin from these questions.

Sociological Perspective

The Dalits see themselves as non-entities, non-persons and non-people in this country. The Dalits are the *avarnas,* people who are out of the *varna dharma* or caste system. However, they are the original inhabitants, the indigenous people of the land. But now they find themselves under domination, slavery and injustice. They are forced to lead a life of contradiction and estrangement in the land of their birth. They are discriminated against, socially, religiously, politically, economically and above all, ideologically. They are treated as polluted people, destined to be poor and perpetually made to remain powerless, all of these factors man-made. Thus, suffering is the marked character of Dalits' existence. The Dalits are a humiliated and crushed mass of people. They always serve others; they are the slaves of others. To be a Dalit means to live in humiliation, pain and constant suffering and this is because others have deprived them of their 'health' (Cf: Godwin Shiri, "Dalit Christians: Double Discrimination", Bangalore CISRS). The stigma they suffer is rightly called the "wounded psyche" by Bishop M. Azariah (Cf: M Azariah, TOWARDS A DALIT THEOLOGY, p 118). This psychic wound has been inflicted on the Dalits by others.

Further, the Dalits see themselves as exploited people, a defeated, dispossesed and deprived people. They live apart, segregated and scattered.

One may rightly ask: How do we know that this is the reality of Dalits? The answer is : 'To suffer is to know', ie., those who suffer are the ones who know better than others who do not as to what happens to them and around them. The Dalits know because they are the ones who suffer indignities and insults and inhuman treatments. It is the victim, the sufferer, the opposed who speak

the truth. This is the perspective of the underdogs, the underside of history. In other words, the Dalits are and have become 'invisible people', non-entities and their present-day identity is a man-defined one.

Dalit Economics

The economic life of Dalit is depressing. This is so because the Dalits are economically exploited, deprived, and a structured and organized inequality is meted out to them. Job opportunities for them are restricted and competition is the rule. The 'positive discrimination policy' has helped as well as harmed them. The Dalits are disproportionately agricultural labourers and they are hard working people. They almost always do hard and hazardous jobs, but they are paid low-wages and are assigned low-status. In a nutshell, one can say that the modernization-trend of urbanization has by-passed Dalits to a great extent. The issue here is: how to enable the Dalits to enjoy the fruits of modernization?

Dalit Politics

Dalits in the past, through the initiative of B.R. Ambedkar had attempted several political initiatives and among these, three deserve to be mentioned: Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Castes Federation and the Republican Party of India. Unfortunately, all of these initiatives failed. The reasons for their failure, among others, are two:"Casteism of the outcastes" and manipulation of political reservation of Dalits by political parties. The issue that arises here is: what step can the Dalits take politically?

Dalit Movements

One identifies three phases in the Dalit Movement of the past. The three phases are: Mass conversion movements, Caste Hindu efforts at social reform and self-assertion and self-reliance on the part of the Dalits (Cf: John C.B. Webster, DALIT CHRISTIANS: A HISTORY, Delhi, ISPCK). And, in the Dalit Movements, one identifies two typologies namely, Reformative (e.g. M.K. Gandhi) and Alternative (e.g. B.R. Ambedkar). The issue here is: which

typology has to be adopted by the Dalits - Reformative or Alternative? or, should they attempt both?

Dalit Literature

The "Dalit Panthers" Movement which originated in the post Independence era in Maharastra later spread to Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh and other states. The Dalit Panthers Movement arose out of Dalit Sahitya Movement. In other words, the Dalit Panthers Movement in Maharastra was both a political and literary movement. The inspiration to the Dalit Sahitya Movement came from Dr. Ambedkar. This movement has three distinguishing marks namely, pathos, protest and a search for a better tomorrow. It is the outcome of the active involvement of Dalit writers in the actual Dalit struggle - movements and now, many universities have a separate branch of the study for Dalit Literature.

If Dalit Literature is the outcome of active involvement, the fruit of praxis and, if its primary data are collected from Dalits themselves, then this is the quintessence of non-Christian Dalits' faith reflections. This then raises the issue of relationship between Dalit Christian theology and other Dalit theologies and life and faith reflections?

Dalit Religion

The Dalits worshipped and do worship their ancestors and they also worship female deities. Historically, the Aryans subjugated Dalits for exploiting their labour. The Dalits were denied access to temples, were denied worshipping-rights and, *karma samsara*, the exploitative doctrine, was used to determine the status of Dalits. This meant no freedom for the Dalits and this necessitated conversion to a religion other than Hinduism. They value their right to freedom of religion. Government after Government, after Independence has had pro-Hindu bias (Cf: Sebastian Kappen, JESUS AND CULTURAL REVOLUTION, Bombay, BUILD Pub, 1983, p 36).

Certain issues arise from these assertions: first is the issue of reconstructing pre-Aryan Dalit Religion through an in-depth research. The second is : to enquire how reliable are the histories of Mass Conversions in India attempted so far?

Dalit History and Culture

For Dalit identity the question of the history and culture is important. Because, people's roots and their historical consciousness are important to determine the identity issue. Therefore, there is a need to reconstruct the Dalit history. But there are several problems in this direction: The current historiographer is not on their side and the academic historian demands historical sources, particularly written sources or archaeological findings.

Dalit histories are oral histories based on oral traditions. Since the Dalits are a conquered people, their history has to be constructed from hostile sources. In other words, there is need for "interested" historical scholarship which will treat oral traditions as "alternative" historical sources.

Further, the Dalits are the *avarnas*, people outside the four-fold caste system. They, along with the tribals, are the original inhabitants of the land. Thus, their history and culture are pre-Aryans as well as pre-Dravidian. There is also the need to study the Dalits rituals, rites, festivals and other ceremonies.

To sum up, the Dalit reality is characterized by the following elements or features: predominantly rural, dispersion throughout the country, at the bottom-most of the social hierarchy and on the wrong side of pollution line, uniform poverty, allegiance to several political parties and ideologies, the persistence of a religious ideology that gave rise to untouchability, the long years of subordination etc, and the search for a better tomorrow today implies arousing Dalit consciousness. Thus Dalit journey from rejection to resurrection may have to adopt a variety of routes and strategies and the traffic rules to follow are: Educate, Agitate and Organize (Cf:

Devasahayam, "Dimensions of Dalit Dilemma", Gurukul Summer Institute, Madras. 1995)

The Dalit Issues

Dalits in Dialogue

This is the crucial challenge facing the Dalits today. The Dalits are not a homogeneous group. They have a shared history and destiny. How to unite the Dalits who are scattered all over the country, who face language, culture and other barriers? The Dalits are in different camps. They are in different political parties and they follow different religious persuasions. They are in Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. Some Dalits are within the fold of Hinduism, They are also in Buddhism. How to create in them a Dalit consciousness, make them rise above their political, religious and ideological affiliations and strive for their unity/solidarity? This means to say that there is no cohesive national movement of Dalits.

Further, the Dalits are disunited. The disunity of the Dalits can be traced to the operation of certain factors. The chief among them is the "casteism of the outcastes". The Dalits, who were originally outside the demonic caste system, have adopted today hierarchical distinctions amongst themselves. This is due to the blind following of the *varna* ideology. Thus, there are Malas and Madigas in Andhra Pradesh, who do not have anything to do with each other; there are Mahars and Mongs in Maharashtra; there are Pulayas and Parayas in South. All of them operate and exist as distinct groups, one claiming superiority over the other, thus forgetting the fact that they are all victims of the same *varna* ideology.

The other important reason for the disunity of the Dalits is that there are forces which are bent upon dividing the Dalits. For example, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is opposed to the Muslims and other minorities and it has brought about a split between Muslims and Dalits. Larger political parties with upper caste leadership are undermining the unity and solidarity of the Dalits

by engineering divisions on sub-caste lines. The BJP's attempt to woo the non-Mahar Dalits is a supreme example.

The disunity of the Dalits is also caused by the betrayal of Dalit leaders who get co-opted by different forces. Opportunistic alliances with political parties who only see Dalits as 'vote banks' for their electoral and power games. The Dalits are co- opted in the academia and in political parties and, others see to it that the Dalits remain divided. For example, the Dalits and other Backward classes in the Bahujan Samaj Party. Together they won power in U.P. But the question is: Whether the Dalits are the real beneficiaries who are the weakest? Political power there does not mean the development of Dalits. Backward Classes movements are anti-brahminical. At the same time, they are anti- Dalit.

Hitherto, the Dalits have drawn inspiration from Ambedkar. His insights and reflections are useful even today. But there is need for Dalits to have dialogue with other faiths and ideologies. For example, the Rationalist tradition of E.V.R. Periyar in Tamil-nadu, Sri Narayana Guru tradition in Kerala etc, though the latter had become almost brahminical!.

In the present day context of emerging religious fascist culture, underlaid by the Hindutva philosophy/ideology, newer ways of co-opting Dalits into the Hindu-fold are becoming evident.

Communalism, seen as the opposite of secularism today, in-volves the use of religion for an entirely secular purpose,- of political order. The world view of Hindutva is that society is a pre-ordained structure of differential privileges. That is, *dharma* consists in living by rules governing the position of groups within the hierar-chically-ordered social structure. It is to live according to the ascribed caste status to eventually attain *moksha* and a dose of patriotism in that view is to contribute to the greatness of the Hindu nation. Inspite of occasional noises made about the abhorrent practices of untouchability and patriarchy, the upper caste Hindus can never compromise on the equality of all persons irrespective of caste, creed or sex, because it hurts their self-interest,ie. their

privilege and power. Hindutva is not a friend of Dalits and women! The co- option moves are attempted to promote a false consciousness among Dalits of equality and religio-cultural acceptance by the Hindu hierarchy without removing their social stigma. Dalits should beware this dangerous move (Cf: M.E. Prabhakar, "Some notes on emerging priorities (Directions) for the Dalit Movement with reference to Andhra, Karnataka and Maharastra", Bangalore CISRS).

The worldview of Hindutva is a societal structure pre-ordained by differential privileges. But, the Dalits and Tribals believe in their adi-culture, adi-morality of spiritual equality being the basis of their social equality. This has been surpassed by the conquest of the Aryans, by the brahmanic culture.

Reclaiming What Belongs to Dalits

Over the centuries, the Dalits have lost some of the things which originally belonged to them. The dominant Brahmanic tradition had usurped some of their heritages. Further research is a must to reclaim what originally belonged to the Dalits. For example, Shiva bias is there in Ramayana. Vishnu is said to have broken the power of Shiva. Lo and behold! Shiva is a Dravidian deity! Further, Ravana is a devotee of Shiva, but he is depicted as a demon, a Rakshasa and, he is overcome by Rama. Parvathi is given to Shiva. Thus a process of co-option is identified. In other words, the Hindu Kingdoms and the Brahmin priests supported by them had over the centuries taken over the important and popular sacred groves of the Dalits, as a part of their economic and political control of the territory under them. In the process, brahmin priests had woven new myths around Dalit gods, festivals and rituals connecting them with the dominant brahmanical tradition. As a result, the Dalits not only lost their gods, control over their groves and rituals, but also internally assimilated brahminical versions of myths and rituals. There is, therefore, the need to decipher and explode these myths.

Further, though the Dalit awareness is on the increase and the militant political mobilization on anti-brahmin ideology continues,

it is important to note that the reform process continues within the Hindu tradition to absorb the Dalits. Different organizations and individuals initiate changes within the framework of this process of absorption and these changes are taking place in an uncoordinated way. A few examples may be cited: the installation of the statue of Nandanar, a Dalit martyr and saint, by the Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kama Koti; appointment of Ravi Dasi priest (a Dalit) as the chief priest of the famous Mahavir Temple in Patna; the slogan of one village one well; making a Dalit lay the first brick at the inaugural ceremony of building the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya by the BJP; renovation of Dalit shrines of Hindu mutts and their gradual Sanskritization; the decision of Sri Vijayamahantesh Swamiji of IIkal Math, a leading Lingayat monastery in Karnataka, to make a Dalit his successor; attempts to take Dalits into caste temples by Swami Agnivesh; attempt to make the Dalits play *Panchavadhyam* in Guruvayur temple by Swami Bhootanand Thirth etc.

It is also important to note that the political approach takes a different form among the Dalits themselves. The traditional sub-castes within the Dalit community form their own sub-caste associations. For example, in Kerala, each and every group within the Dalit community has its own organizations like Pulaya Mahasabha, Sambava Mahasabha, Sidder Service Society, etc. This situation is in no way different from Tamilnadu and some other states. These tend to register the communities' shrines under their own organisations. Traditional religious commonality of gods, goddesses, festivals and rites make them consider themselves as Hindus. Though marriage and death ceremonies are conducted without brahmin priests, occasionally it is found that brahmin priests are too willing to officiate at some of the rich Dalit shrines. There is also a tendency of dropping their traditional forms of worship with more Sanskritizesed forms. All these point to the fact that "the political stand of anti- Brahmanism is not carried to the religious level in all its aspects" (Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, Dalit Identity and the Religio-Cultural Situation - A working Paper", CISRS)

In Dalit folk religion, one finds gods, goddesses, ancestors heroes and heroines, rituals, festivals, songs, myths and proverbs protesting against caste impositions. Some of these myths, rituals and festivals show the Brahminical layer super-imposed on them. These local and regional traditions need to be reinterpreted so as to draw inspiration for creative work in the future.

As regards counter-cultural elements within Dalit traditions, it is said that "there is need to unearth and popularise" them (Cf: Devasahayam, "Dimensions of Dalit Dilemma", op, cit).

Yes, there are counter-cultural elements found within the Dalit tradition. From about the sixth century onwards, the historical evidence of untouchable saints rejecting the Vedas and other Brahminical scriptures and practices is available. For example, some of the Cittar saints in the south rejected the Vedas etc. It is possible that they drew inspiration to do this from the earlier protest religions like Buddhism and Jainism. From the 12th century onwards, one finds a number of movements in different parts of the country led by untouchable saints along with others who taught about the essential unity of mankind and the oneness of God. They condemned caste, rejected the authority of the Vedas and other Brahminical books, ridiculed the Brahmin priests, their rituals and practices. The Islamic influence on some of these saints is also identified. Unfortunately, all of these protest and counter-cultural movements are under the control of Hinduism. This seems to be the ground reality as pointed out by Ayrookuzhiel (Ayrookyzhiel. "Dalit Identity and the Religio Cultural...." op.cit.).

The other thing that needs to be recovered and restored to the Dalits is their original spirituality. The Brahminic spirituality is a flight from the world. The Dalits' spirituality too speaks about renunciation of the world. But this renunciation emphasizes that the initiative is within, and that Dalits therefore need not be afraid of the world, that world is not *maya* and that they, through their own decision, stop caring for worldly pleasures and worldly values.

This seems to be a type of Advaita, but it is clearly not classical Advaita.

Dalits believe in the permanence, the primacy and power of the soul over caste and the body; in the consciousness that they are innately endowed with equal mental capacities; in the indivisibility, non-caste morality, ie., each and every soul being an equal replica of *Prajapati,* with no need for any divisions of the *varna* between head, shoulder, belly and feet of the Creator; that true *dharma* is to strive for the good of all and to strive against all forms of social injustices (Cf: M.E. Prabhakar, "Emerging Priorities"...op.cit.). This being the indigenous ideology of the Dalits, it has real traditions towards secular-democratic practices.

The Dalits-The Indigenous People

The Dalits, with the Tribals, are the indigenous people of India. None Says that Aryans are indigenous people. However, in the recent past, literature are brought out to claim that there were no Aryan invasions at all and thereby to say that Aryans did not subjugate the indigenous people.

The attempt by the BJP in Madhya Pradesh to rewrite history has two aims. It is to prove that:

* The Aryans are the people of the land. To state that they are the indigenous people.
* That the Harappan culture is a contribution of the Aryans, as also the early Hindu Kings. For example: Chanakya having been responsible for creating a nationalist ethos in India.

Even the official denial of the Indian Government that India does not have any indigenous people is a conspiracy of the upper castes against the Dalits and also Tribals and it is a direct and deliberate denial of the identity of 300 million Dalits. This constitutes a violation of Human Rights and it is a direct genocide of the Dalits, to wash out a race.

These historical inaccurancies and distortions are deliberately introduced for legitimizing the identity and power of the dominant elite and also to counter the claim of Dalits and Adivasis to be the original inhabitants/indigenous people of India.

Further, though the Dalits have been the focus of several studies over the decades, they were mostly victims of written tradition from time immemorial. In all the written traditions, they have been projected as objects, not as creators of history (Cf: Devasahayam, "Dimensions of Dalit Dilemma", op. cit). The issues here are: what approach should be adopted in reconstructing Dalit history? What interpretative methods are to be followed? What is the place of oral traditions? etc. Certain consensus are available. Dalit family histories need to be collected. In constructing Dalit history, the general approach should be to attempt it from a subaltern perspective, from the perspective of the suffering people, the underside of history, ie., Dalit perspective.

'The Aryan-Indigenous people's controversy should be attended to within the framework of historical debate. But deliberate attempts are being made today by some communal media and intelligentsia to divert the debate. The Dalits need to be aware of these anti-Dalit movement. The Dalits still lack pre-Christian, pre-Hindu, ie., primal sources. What we know now are based on opinions, conjectures and views. There is, thus, a need to go deeper into this problem. However, the situation is not gloomy. The future prospects are promising. This means to say that there is no single approach to history which can be regarded as "the method". Our understanding of 'method' changes in accordance with the development of scientific knowledge in the field. As already pointed out, oral traditions of the Dalits must be written down and treated as historical sources. People live history as tradition. Therefore, people can be treated as "texts". In doing this, one need not wait for consent from the academia which are communal and anti-Dalit.

The historian in context has the right to reinterpret both history and the present situation in his own terms, and it needs to be recognized that help can come from hostile sources. In attempting such an alternative history, using people as the texts or sources, commitment, the first act, constitutes the epistemological break. The need of the time is history written in such a way that it is relevant, relevant in reflecting the human experiences of suffering and bringing about a vision of social transformation. We need to come of age and recognize that we need the perspective of the oppressed people. That is to say, the collective experiences of the oppressed people must be recognized as legitimate historical source in a relevant reconstruction of history. The perspective of the oppressed is important for, it is from the oppressed that the truth emerges (Cf: F.J. Balasundaram, EATWOT IN ASIA, may be cited as an example). The oppressed masses who struggle for meaning and humanity are the embodiment of truth. For a Christian historian, the perspective of the oppressed as the starting point is a must because the God of the Bible, and of Jesus of his own historical context, is a God of the oppressed. The privileged datum for encountering this God today is the oppressed humans. Such a history can be written only with the perspective of commitment to the oppressed. Such a starting point can truly inform, equip, energize and empower people who seek a better tomorrow today. To write history means to "make meaning" available to those who seek justice and truth. This is a spiritual vocation, a truth-quest and it is a process of continued commitment. It is this alternative history that the Dalits are justified in constructing.

The Core-Value of Dalit Culture

Some sincere attempts have been made to discover and study the values of Dalit culture in the recent past (Cf: Parattai, "Dalit Religion and Culture", Gurukul Summer Institute, 1995). Certain insights which have emerged are helpful: that for Dalits, community is egalitarian; in the liberation of Dalits, not only the socio-economic and politico-Ideological (Marxine) but also psychological, ecological, gender and spiritual structures need to be taken seriously; "Oru

Ulai (colloquially, it is *olai*) (One-cooking pot, meaning one family) practice is important for Dalits; that Dalits see power as just service and that they rotate power, etc. These efforts deserve recognition and appreciation. But the question is: what is the core-value of this Dalit culture and how would it be helpful to the Dalits in a post-Modern era? Do these values reinforce Dalit identity or remove it? These questions are important in the context of globalisation of the market and the pervasiveness of the culture of consumerism and Hinduism which absorb anything of value from all sources and quarters.

Dalits and the Policy of Protective/Positive Discrimination

The recommendations of the Mandal Commission with regard to Dalits are yet to be implemented. It is to be remembered that Mandal Commission recommendations coincited with the destruction of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in 1992. Further, the concessions granted to other Backward Classes (OBC's) have pushed to the background the Dalit claims and concerns and, thus marginalised them. OBC's are not Dalits!

The question is: How do we help Dalits? A related question is: How much of positive discrimination filters down to the Dalits? Inspite of years of positive discrimination since 1950, the Dalits do not have any command over resources, as pointed out by the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Cf: B.D. Sharma, DALITS BETRAYED). Why is this? Because, harm to ecology, especially to natural resources such as land and forest and *mal* or nil-distribution of land deprive Dalits from having any command over resources. This exclusion of Dalits from participating in or gaining from developmental processes leads to radical reaction and militant protests and violent retaliation in self-defence in different parts of India. An example is Karnataka. Therefore, enabling Dalits to gain command over resources is imperative and a guaranteeing of the continuation of Reservations/positive discrimination policy, is essential.

The Dalit poverty is due to their position in the productive process. Dalits, being mostly agricultural, produce food for India, but they go hungry because the land is not in their hands. So much so, the rural poverty and landlessness are inter-related, the point is that there is inequality in agricultural land-holdings. 'Land to the tiller' as a reform measure remains a slogan, as it is totally neglected. Redistribution or sharing of 'land to the tiller' means to share power with the Dalits. This is why that programme or measure is not seriously considered and implemented by the upper caste wielders of power.

The Dalits are poor and are like the poor anywhere. But they suffer more than one disadvantage namely, economic disadvantage, coupled with religiously based social discrimination and isolation. In other words, the Dalits suffer economic and social or religious oppression and exploitation at the same time. Caste system is soical, but it is also a graded economic system. Hence, there is need, as Devasahayam has rightly put, to evolve a 'Clast' strategy, i.e., a strategy to fight against both 'Class' and 'Caste' at the same time (Cf: Devasahayam, "Dimensions of Dalit Dilemma", op.cit.).

A related issue is the issue of reservations/positive discrimination policy. Reservations in education, employment and legialative bodies apart from legal and economic measures are aimed at Dalits' welfare. But the same reservations are the cause of resentment, jealously and hatred on the part of non-Dalits who offer resistance when Dalits assert their social and economic rights through availing the benefits of reservation.

With regard to reservation, it must be pointed out that the ratio of reservation is fixed in proportion to the Dalits' population ratio, which is not yet revised. The denial of and opposition to a proportional reservation is a denial of minimum justice and human rights, to a section of the society namely, Dalits. Therefore, the claim of human rights should become applicable to social collectives.

There have been a positive impact as a result of reservations. It has created an educational culture in people; it has enabled thousands of Dalit youth to improve their lot; it has enabled the Dalits to have a visibility of the working of the political system. Anti-Discrimination legislations such as Prevention of Civil Rights Act (1976) and Prevention of Atrocities Act (1989) have helped in delegitimizing untouchability. However, there have been adverse effects also. The Dalits are mocked at as "government Brahmins". Dalits have to declare publicly their caste status to avail benefits which reinforces their inferiority complex.

The Dalit students and bureacrats are mentally tortured by the talk of merit, efficiency and quality, even when they have all of these. Another adverse effect is that reservation in legislatures does not enable the Dalits to be a part of radical politics. In brief, the reservations define Dalits problem as a welfare problem, not as a matter of social justice.

A related issue is the problem of Dalit converts. According to the Presidential Order of 1950 "no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of the Scheduled Caste". But the Scheduled Caste Sikhs and Buddhists have been deemed eligible for the benefits of reservation in 1956 and 1990 respectively. Not so the Scheduled Caste converts to Christianity, and Islam! Here is a gross .interference in the religious freedom of the Dalits. When the Sikhs and Buddhists are included in the reservation, why not Christians and Muslims? Here is a presumption that the Dalits attain upward mobility in socio-economic terms at conversion. It is not true. Converts to Christianity and Islam who are not deemed eligible for reservation, are deemed eligible when they reconvert to Hinduism! Here is a deep-seated bias against Dalit conversions to Christianity and Islam and this discrimination is aimed at encouraging reconversions of Dalits back to Hinduism. Inspite of soothing slogans and piece-meal ameliorative measures, what we have in essence is a 'Hindu Raj' in India!. Thus, India is not a secular state!!. Opposition to

conversion of Dalits to Islam and Christianity and discrimination meted out to the converts point to the fact of political expediency!!!

Dalit Women - Victims of Triple Oppression

The Dalit women are the victims of unjust systems of patriarchy, capitalism and casteism and thus, they lead a life of subordination, violence, drudgery and sexual exploitation. In recent years, there is an alarming increase in the number of atrocities of stripping and parading naked, molestation and rape of Dalit women in different parts of India. Example: U.P. and Karnataka. This is attempted in order to demolish the self- respect of the Dalits and to assert the political and communal power by the vested interests. The Indian women in general and the Dalit Women in particular, are victims of caste and patriarchy nexus.

In the attempt to emancipate Dalit women, one identifies a struggle between two currents namely, the brahminical and the nonbrahminical. The former legislates and defends women's slavery and the latter opposes it. The Left women's movement in India should be critiqued for, it operates as a satellite of Left men's movements. The Brahminical women leaders of the Left movement do not criticise Manu!

A related issue is the place of women in the Dalit Movement in general. The Dalit women are active in the movement, but they do not seem to hold and play leadership positions and roles within the Dalit Movement. This is an area of serious concern.

Internationalizing the Dalit Issue

The task ahead is gigantic and the oppression that the Dalits suffer is immeasurable and monumental. Therefore, internationlizing the Dalit issue is a paramount urgency. Global solidarity of the oppressed needs to be fostered in order to combat the caste system which is worse than racism. Caste system is more pernicious because untouchability which is its base is invisible! The historical process of Dalits recovering their human rights demands a reconstruction of their true historical past and their attempts at

self-redemption over the centuries. This gigantic task, which involves a historical critique of the dominant tradition and intelligent use of the folk memories and traditions of the Dalits, requires international co-operation.

Dalits and Dalit Theology

Dalit theology is a reflection by Dalit Christians to overcome their situation of 'dalitness'. It is an attempt by Dalit Christians done on behalf of and for and by the Dalit community at large. But this Dalit Christian theology has certain limitations. That is to say, Dalits who are not Christians, are also involved in doing theology or life reflections. Life reflections by the non-Christian Dalits are in the form of ideology. One may argue by saying that it is also theology, a theology which reflects on human experiences of suffering and uses human words, though the exercise is not distinctively Christian. This then raises the issue of the dividing line between theology and ideology. In reality, the dividing line between theology and ideology wear thin and becomes obscure, when ideology involves identifying sources of domination and power located within the religio-cultural herritage. Therefore, the question raised by Prabhakar seems to be valid: "Can we speak of Dalitology, including both dalit theology and Dalit Ideology? "(M.E. Prabhakar, "A Note on the Evolving Direction for Dalit Theology/Ideology" CISRS). Dalit liberation to become an endeavor for establishing a coherent, dynamic thought and action/action-reflection, there is need to go for this theology-ideology continuum.

Further, expressions such as 'Christian', theology etc., can be misunderstood by Dalits who are not Christians. In a predominantly non-Christian society, using the term 'theology' with its Christian connotations, both in concept and practice, may become a source of suspicion and prejudice, blocking shared praxis. In a pluralistic context, therefore, it will be more meaningful and fruitful to explore the content of spirituality and religiosity towards emphasizing universal human values. Thus, Dalit Liberation theology cannot be merely 'Christian' it has to be inter- religious, inter-ethnic,

inter-cultural and even inter-communal, considering the fact that in India religious communities are the basic social segments that engage in dialogue and action.

While the Dalits' quest for liberation is comprehensive, it is also specific. It is comprehensive in the sense, the liberation that Dalits seek includes socio-economic and socio-political empowerment. It is specific in the sense, Dalit liberation is a process of socio-cultural emancipation, which both precede and lead their socio-economic and socio-political empowerment. The question of specificity is important for Dalit liberation because, it is easier to theologize with such universal category as the 'poor', the 'oppressed' etc. In this case, the 'poor' and the 'oppressed' remain faceless. It is only when a theology takes specificity seriously that 'identities' are established and 'no people' become people yes, 'god's people'. This is to say that in the Indian context, the Dalits are the poor and the oppressed, the faceless, the invisible and marginalized people. Their reality and struggle is the 'signs of the times', where God is at work. A theology worth its name and which seeks to be relevant cannot ignore Dalits' quest for liberation. In the Indian context, it is Dalits whose identity is at stake and hence 'identity' should become a theological category. Dalit theology, like other Third world liberation theologies, is basically a theology of Identity.

Dalit theology is not and cannot be exclusive. A theology that is exclusive cannot be Christian. Dalit theology is pursued for others' liberation also. The goal of Dalit theology is Dalit liberation, their empowerment,. ie., strengthening Dalits, providing comfort to them encouraging them and sharing the good news with them, the good news that God is with them in their struggle, that they are God's children and that they have their own God- given identity and that they are people with worth and dignity. That is, human dignity is more important than the question of economic emancipation. At the same time, it speaks about the gospel of forgiveness to the oppressors. The oppressor can share life with the Dalits quest which should be/inclusive community where all will have

and share life. But, do the Dalits have life now to share with others? Is there health in them? Hence, life for Dalits is the first priority. Others can share life with them after the Dalits have attained life and health. In other words, Dalit theology must be informed by a social vision which is liberative in character. Such a transforming social vision ought to be based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. In other words, the common Dalit experience of Christian Dalits along with other Dalits, should shape a Christian Dalit theology.

Since the context of Dalits is not a uniform one, it is better to speak of and strive for authentic Dalit theologies, not one or mono, but plural formulations and expressions.

Reformulation of certain Christian concepts and doctrines is necessary. For example, the concept of Servanthood. Relating Jesus' servanthood to dalit reality does not help the Dalits. Jesus had a self to offer in servanthood, whereas the Dalits are already in servanthood, rather in servility. They do not have an authentic self to offer to others. In such a context, is it helpful to speak of servanthood, service and patient enduring of suffering? We may accept suffering to the extent that suffering helps overcome the suffering inflicted by others. Thus, in preaching, projecting and emphasizing the servant image care needs to be given. This means that we should not romanticize suffering eg., Jesus, the Sufferer, the Servant, a dead Christ. Dalit theology should project an image of Jesus that has worth, dignity and freedom. Let us not preach a Jesus who has a crown and who has attained glory, nor a Jesus who suffered to the end and was dead, but a Jesus who is the True man, a man of freedom, identity, worth, dignity and a man with a mission.

There is also need to overhaul the concept of original sin operative in the church today. That concept of sin that reinforces, like the theory of *Karma*, helplessness, inferiority, sinfulness, complex and guilt in Dalits, needs to be looked at critically and revised suitability.

To sum up, Dalit liberation should became a self-discovery of the Indian Church. Christ in India today is everywhere, but supremely in the suffering Dalit, a Paraya, the historical person. The major task then is to struggle for Dalit liberation by creating Dalit consciousness among the Dalits and also consciousness among the caste people about the Dalit reality. Dalit theology's first and foremost task is to empower the inner person of the Dalits and restore to them their rightful place with socio-economic, political and religo-cultural spheres. In the final count, all strivings should lead to inclusive humanism for, the goal is the identity and humanity of the Dalits within the human community.

Courtesy: *Liberating witness: Dr. K. Rajaratnam's Platinum Birth Anniversary Commemoration*, Edited by Prasanna Kumari, Vol I, Chennai: The Gurukul Lutheran Theological college and Research Institute, 1995, p. 399-419 .

DALIT THEOLOGY AND OTHER THEOLOGIES

Franklyn. J. Balasundaram

Introduction

To situate the relevance of Dalit Theology, it is important that one looks at other theologies. In other words, without making an attempt to know what we mean by other theologies, we will not be able to understand and appreciate Dalit Theology which is gaining currency and contextual relevance in the present-day context of India.

Theology, that is, the faith-articulation is not the monopoly of Christians only. People of other Faiths also do theology. We need to bear this in mind. But then, traditionally the term "theology" has been associated with Christian religious enterprise only. In this sense, "other theologies" refers to Christian theologies only. This limitation is a necessary part of this paper.

In this paper, we will make reference to Traditional Western Christian Theology and Indian Christian Theology, under the broad term "other theologies" and this will be followed by an explication of emerging Dalit Theology or Dalit Theologies.

This paper represents one view. It admits that there can be other views as well.

Traditional Western Christian Theology:

Those who are concerned about evolving a truly liberating Christian theology in India are obliged to critique and at the same time seek dialogue with the Traditional Western Christian Theology. So far, Dalit theologies have given attention to Indian Christian Theology only. This is not enough. They should start their critique, first and foremost, with the Traditional Western Christian Theology.

In dealing with the Traditional Western Christian Theology, we are not that much interested in detailing how it emerged, who

made it, who brought it to our context etc. Rather, we are interested more in explaining what it is, what role it has played or is playing in our context today and whether it has been or is helpful to us now or not. This means to talk about the characteristics and the impact of Traditional Western Christian Theology.

So then, we move first to describe its characteristics. Among others, we want to highlight, the following: Traditional Western Christian Theology, according to Byung Mu Ahn, a Korean theologian from the Heidelberg University in Germany, is speculative, kerygmatic, logos theology, individualistic, other worldly and dichotomic theology and that it underestimates social evils.[1] Aloysius Pieris, the only Asian theologian who has made reference to Dalit Sahitya in his writings, apart from Samuel Rayan in India, finds western Christian Theology to be immune to suffering and he says that it rationally justifies the existence of oppression and injustice. It is said to be pietistic and, capitalistic in scope and function.[2] His compatriot, Tissa Balasuriya, finds it to be culture-bound, adult, male, clerical, anti-communistic, non-revolutionary, handmaid of western expansion, church-centred, individualistic and even disrespectful of nature.[3] To this, the Korean woman theologian Park Sun Ai adds that its dualistic notion has helped woman to be associated with body, emotion, temptress and all the lower values of life, when men were associated with spiritual, intellectual, noble, sacred and all the higher values. The superior concept of male ideology was used in constructing the Traditional Western Christian Theology.[4] A.P. Nirmal, one of the pioneers of emerging Dalit Theology says that traditional confessional theology affirms that God is unchangeable; that He has revealed Himself fully, finally and uniquely in Jesus, confessed to be the Christ, and that all things necessary for salvation are given in the Holy Scriptures.[5] These

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1. Byung Mu Ahn, THE PROPHETIC VOICES OF ASIA, Vol 1.
2. Aloysius Pieris, Ibid, Vol. 2.
3. Tissa Balasuriya, Ibid.
4. Sun Ai Park in EATWOT IN ASIA
5. A.P. Nirmal, CONTEMPORARY ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

are the individual perceptions of certain theologians in the Asian context about the Traditional Western Christian Theology. Put together, about twenty-two Third World theologians, after making a critical analysis of Traditional Western Christian Theology, came to the realization in 1976 at Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania that it needed to be discarded because, it did not, as they felt, suit the particular contexts of Third World countries they represented. It was these theologians who together formed what later came to be known as EATWOT, the acronym for the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. Western Christian Theology, after all, was just one cultural interpretation of Christianity and therefore it should not be uncritically adopted without raising the question of their relevance to the Third world, they had said. Therefore, they expressed this their conviction thus:

"The theologies from Europe and North America are dominant today in our churches and represent one form of cultural domination. They must be understood to have arisen out of situations related to those countries, and therefore must not be uncritically adopted without our raising the question of their relevance in the context of our countries. Indeed, we must, in order to be faithful to the Gospel and to our peoples, reflect on the realities of our own situation and interpret the Word of God in relation to these realities. We reject as irrelevant an academic type of theology that is divorced from action. We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection on the praxis of the reality of the Third World".[6]

Having said that, we should make reference to certain aspects: no Christian Dalit, unfortunately, was involved in the formulation of this statement: Traditional Christian Theology was constructed in the context of seminary or class-room or the monastery: the theology that the Third World theologians wanted to make was concerned about people - the poor, the oppressed and the marginated in history. What they proposed was a framework, a framework

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6. Cf. EATWOT IN ASIA.

which would enable people to adopt different approaches to doing theology in context. They stressed the importance of recognizing ordinary people's faith-reflections as theological reflections. In other words, what they proposed concerned the "poor", the "oppressed" and the "people" in general. But these are the faceless ones, the unrecognizables, the masses. Under this general category, the specific oppression which some people might suffer may be overlooked or ignored as irrelevant. However, it must be noted that this Traditional Western Christian Theology had provided impetus for personal spirituality and for tremendous missionary expansion. All the same, this theology could not and it did not provide motivation for opposing the evils of racism, sexism, capitalism, colonialism and neo- colonialism and we may add now, casteism.

Why are we talking about the Traditional Western Christian Theology? Because it is the same theology that was operative in the past and is operative today in our churches and elsewhere. Among others, apart, from the ones highlighted above, three important things that need to be mentioned are the concept of original sin, obedience and personal holiness. It is these concepts which prove to be detrimental to the liberation of a particular people who have been and are under a specific oppression. This Traditional Western Christian Theology is not to be denigrated because, for one thing, it is a part of our Christian heritage. Instead of denigrating it, one should attempt to provide correction to it as well as reinterpret the tradition in our particular context. For another, in spite of abuses and aberrations, at the heart of the Traditional Western Christian Theology is the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the universal element in Christian Theology. Thus, a critique and a dialogue with it are in order. J.R. Chandran and Tissa Balasuriya are right in affirming the above.[7]

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7. J.R Chandran, EATWOT IN ASIA, THE PROPHETIC VOICES OF ASIA, Vol. 1 and CONTEMPORARY ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

Third World Liberation Theologies:

Under this topic, we shall consider two specific streams of theologies namely, Latin American Liberation Theology and other Theologies of Identities. A neat classification is not possible here, but let us try that for clarity's sake.

First, the Latin American Liberation Theology. It has been and still is operative in our context today. It is an imported theology. Marxian tools of analysis are used to make this theology and the liberation that it seeks, primarily, is economic liberation. In other words, its traditional doctrinaire Marxists analysis is inadequate in the context of socio-economic realities of India. However, its option for the poor and the oppressed is found useful. Its stress on liberation from the 'now' is important. But it needs to be questioned because it neglects the caste factor which adds to the complexity of the Indian socio economic realities. But then Several Latin American Liberation Theologies have come up in the recent past and therefore, one should find out whether they still use the traditional Marxian doctrinaire analysis or whether they have gone beyond. In any case, the Liberation Theology that is emerging in the Asian context is not a copy of the Latin American Liberation Theology. But it certainly uses Marxian tools of analysis is something we need to bear in mind.

Now to the Theologies of Identities of the Third World. Among these, one can name some: Third World Theology as represented by the EATWOT, Feminist Theology. Minjung Theology, Dalit Theology etc., We shall attempt to deal with them in that order.

First of all, the Third World Theology as represented by the EATWOT. EATWOT'S theological framework includes Marxian analysis. In that sense, it is not purely Christian. But then, What is purely Christian? Sinfulness is there in the structures and in the individuals and the evil which is operative seems to be mysterious. So, there is need to expose this sinfulness. One of the tools that was found useful in this enterprise is the Marxian tools of analysis.

This can be questioned by some, because how can we use Marxian tools of analysis in doing theology and then call it Christian theology? Here a careful distinction needs to be made between a tool for social analysis and ideology. Can Marxism be used as a tool for social analysis to unravel the operation of neo-colonial forces to the extent that it is useful as claimed by Bastian Wielenga? What is unchristian about using Marxian tools to decipher our complex eco-political system? Christianity, as a religion, has no analytical tools and Marxism is not religion. This is again from Wielenga[8] and I am in agreement with him. Traditional western Christian theologians in general have opposed Marxism and why is that? Marxian social analysis as a tool is useful, but we cannot own Marxism as an Ideology. EATWOT is not to be condemned because the theological revolution that it has attempted is certainly useful to some extent. The fact that EATWOT has consistently voiced its protest against Mammon, the anti-God Capitalism is not to be forgotten. We must add that it is accepted within EATWOT that Marxist framework cannot be used as a norm for all Third World countries. EATWOT's critique of the Christian tradition and in that process, their critique of the theology that accompanied the missionary movement is also to be commended. Is it correct to say that the theology of the missionary movement was entirely interested in the underdog namely, Was this theology an ally of colonialism and, now neo-colonialism? How come the Dalits in India flocked to embrace Christianity in large numbers? What about all the contributions made by the missionaries to the uplift of the Dalits? Were they direct or indirect results[9] With a few exceptions namely, the dissident voices within the missionary

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8. Bas Wielenga, MARXIST VIEWS ON INDIA IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, Madras; CLS, 1976 p.XVII

9. Cf; John C.B.Webster, THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND CHANGE IN NINETEENTH CENTURY NORTH INDIA, p. 271; K. Wilson, THE INDIRECT EFFECTS, pp. 113, 119-120; Kaj Baago, THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA'S PAST AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN INDIA in HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY INDIA, Lucknow; Asia publishing House, 1971, edited by John C.B. Webster, pp. 26-45

movement, One may safely conclude at the risk of being misunderstood that Christian missionaries from the west were a part and parcel of their time, with all their prejudices and biases and preferences for the upper and middle classes and caste converts and, the conversion attempts by the Dalits were not purely 'spiritual.' It was an attempt on the part of the Dalits to seek all, food in the context of famines, shelter, employment and protection in the context of caste oppressions and health and healing in the context of sickness[10]. And we may add that only a few individual missionaries were interested in the uplift of the Dalits: one William Gowdie, one Rev. Hatch of the LMS, one C.T.E Rhenius of the CMS and so on. These belonged to the stream of dissidence, not the aggressive mainstream missionary movement. Is it correct to say that the Christian theology of the West which accompanied the missionary movement was not individualistic? Can it be further debated whether the theology of the missionary movement of the past was truly holy? Are the present-day missionary movements truly holy? The US Congress recently lifted the ban on using the missionaries and the clergy for spying activities needs to be critically viewed.[11] Why the ban earlier and the lifting of the ban now? What could the missionaries and clergy do now? What was happening in the past with regard to missionary movement's work? What have the "Christian" missionaries and clergy to do with spying? Further, the role of caste converts who were and are prized by the missionaries in the past and present also needs to be critically looked at. Why did the missionaries have and still have an obsession for the caste converts in spite of all their talk about their concern and love for the underdog such as Dalits? Is it because they want to make sure their vested interests are served and preserved?

Having raised these questions, we should now point out certain draw-backs in the EATWOT movement. Among others, we name just a few; EATWOT was and is even now interested in developing scientifically a theology that spoke with the voice of the poor and

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10. Cf: Waskom Pickett, MASS MOVEMENT IN INDIA, NCC.
11. March Issue of the INDIAN EXPRESS

the marginated in history. The question is: who reads this scientific theological exposition and who needs it except of course those who still find relevance in it? This, ofcourse, applies to all theologies. Should theological articulation be always systematic? If theology as it is understood today is done by the community of believers or by the community, then why should we be systematic and precise? Who are we and what is our role in the theologizing task and, from where and from whom do we derive the right to theologize? Those who oppose EATWOT need to read its Charter of Identity carefully.

Secondly, as I have abundantly highlighted in my dissertation EATWOT IN ASIA, EATWOT methodology, however revolutionary it may be, has not gone far enough. It has not yet fully spoken about the specific oppression such as caste in the Indian context. though it has made peripheral references to it in the past. In other words, it is yet to come up with an adequate framework of analysis to this specific form of oppression such as caste. It is easier to speak about racism in the West, but what about Caste oppression in our own context? EATWOT's call for a radical break in epistemology which calls for engagement in critical reflection on the praxis of the reality has some how precluded the reality of Dalits in India. Does EATWOT have, and still have class and caste interests? The pioneers of the EATWOT movement certainly seem to be visionaries. Then, how come they are still looking for an adequate framework of analysis for the past twenty years?! This is all the more reason why Dalit Theology cannot avoid having a dialogue with EATWOT.

Thirdly, EATWOT's analysis begins with the emergence of Capitalism, i.e., with the history of Capitalism for the past 500 years or so (Vasco de Gama arrived in 1498 at Calicut). Nothing wrong with that because the present day suffering of the Third World can be easily traced back to the era of colonialism. Why did they not go beyond? What would happen if we go beyond that demarcation? Should colonialism be the starting point? Yes, if you refer to the Third world context. Are there specific oppressions which are older than colonialism? Yes, if you refer to the

Indian context specifically. However, this does not mean that we should be easy with the colonial enterprise and the involvement of the Christian missionary benefactions which went along with it.

Now we move to the Feminist and Minjung Theologies. These are also Theologies of Identifies. One of the central issues in Feminist. Theology is patriarchy. While granting that it is an important issue, one may ask: how come the Feminist theologians fail to see the interconnected operation and the unholy alliance of patriarchy and caste in the Indian context? On the other hand, minjung Theology has definitely left out the use of Marxian tools of analysis, it seems[12] It is a Theology by the Minjung the "mass" of "people" and several lay and professional theologians contributed to the emergence of it. Have the Olympic Games and the emergence and spread of the charismatic Christianity silenced the effectiveness of Minjung Theology? Or, is it because that minjung Theology has failed to use an analytical tool such as the Marxian tools of analysis? These are questions to ponder and certainly Dalit Theology should seek a dialogue with both of them.

We should now by sequence talk about Dalit Theology, but we prefer to do so after making reference to the Indian Christian Theology/Theologies.

Indian Christian Theology/Theologies:

These, as we all know, are from the so-called high or upper caste converts to Christianity. Thus, Indian Christian Theology (hereafter ICT) has perpetuated within itself what is know as the "brahminic" tradition. Nirmal brings home this point powerfully thus:

> "Broadly speaking, ICT in the past has tried to work out its theological systems in terms of either Advaita Vedanta or Vaishisahtha Advaita. Most of the contributions of ICT in the past came from caste converts to Christianity. The result has been that ICT has perpetuated within itself what I prefer

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12. Cf. THE PROPHETIC VOICES and EATWOT IN ASIA

to call the 'brahminic tràdition.' This tradition has further perpetuated intuition interiority oriented approach to the theological task in India. One wonders whether this kind of Indian Christian Theology will ever have a mass appeal"[13].

James Massey, joining company with Nirmal, says thus:

"what is missing from the current Indian Christian Theology is the experience of these Christian Dalits. The roots of the current ICT lie in the experiences of mostly upper caste/ class Christian converts of this century and the last century. Here I do not propose the rejection of these known expressions of theologies... All I am saying is that we have to work out another expression of Indian Christian Theology which would be relevant to the living situation of the vast majority of people especially the Dalits."[14]

We end this section with an observation made, again, by Nirmal:

"All this, however, did not make any change to Indian Christian Theology's obsession with the Brahminic tradition. It had no time or inclination to reflect theologically on the Dalit converts who formed the majority of the Indian Church.

To sum up then, whether it is the traditional ICT or the more recent Third World Theology they failed to see in the struggle of Indian Dalits for liberation a subject matter appropriate for doing theology in India. What is amazing is the fact that Indian theologians ignored the reality of the Indian Church while estimates vary, between 50% and 80% of all the Christians in India today are of scheduled caste origin. This is the most important commonality cutting across the various diversities of the Indian Church which would have provided an authentic liberation motif for Indian Christian Theology. If our theologians failed to see this in the past, there is all the more reason for our waking up to

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13. INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: DALITS, ISPCK, p 215; see also: EMERGING DALIT THEOLOGY, p. 123.
14. Ibid, pp. 339-40

this reality today and for applying ourselves seriously to the task of doing Dalit Theology"[15]

So waking up "to this reality" means responding relevantly to the reality and the struggle of the Dalits in India. This also means that the Dalits struggle is not a new challenge. In fact, it has for too long, remained as a challenge. Sadly enough, Indian Christian Theology of the past has ignored it conveniently, or perhaps cunningly or cleverly so far.

Towards a Truly Liberative Indian Christian Theology.

I must frankly admit that I am a newcomer to the field of Christian Dalit Theology and as such I do not want to stake any claim, although my Dalit consciousness goes back to the year 1975. In speaking about it, I do not look for name or fame or any other personal gain. In the same vein, let me add that there have been and there still are several stalwart figures in the field who deserve credit. Hence, I do not want to explicate in detail my understanding of emerging Christian Dalit Theology. Except to say that it is contextually the most relevant and urgently needed. My credentials are a few; I am a convert; a Dalit, yes but there is a mixed origin, I understand; I was baptized by a noble and a good missionary from the Reformed Church of America (RCA); I am Christian; I worked on the EATWOT movement; I have had the privilege to encounter a powerful missionary movement elsewhere; up to now. I have worked and lived with representatives from at least four mission societies; I do know the connections that some of our Dalit theologians have here as well as elsewhere; I am interested in Dalit struggles, not so much in Dalit Theology and, I am not an opportunist. Further, a relative of mine has married a Syrian-Christian, another a Lingayat, one of my sister's-in-law is of brahmin origin and my own sister has married a Muslim.

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15. Ibid, pp. 216-7

With this, I want to briefly state my point of view regarding Dalit Theology with an open mind. The adjective "Christian" is specifically preferred by the champions of Christian Dalit Theology today. How "Christian" is the Christian adjective, one needs to ponder in the light of the issues I want to raise herebelow. One would say that Third World theologians have used the Marxian tools of analysis in doing theology and, since we are Christians, we should keep away from Marxian tools and that we should do really "purely Christian" Dalit Theology. This either shows naivate or hypocrisy. Let me submit: Marxian analysis is inadequate to decipher the mystery of evil, namely the caste system, in the Indian context. However I think, we need some tool for social analysis and we should add to it our own Dalit analysis. The Marxian tool for social analysis is not altogether useless. What we need is a much more comprehensive analysis or rather analytical framework. Theophilus Appavoo's EPSI PEGS (it refers to economic, political, social, ideological, psychological, environmental, gender etc., analytical framework) is one such a tool.[16] In the same way, we need to identify what is "Christian" in the entire Christian tradition and, with emphasis let me add, that without a severe critique of the modern missionary movement, its theology, its paternalism etc., and confessionalism and traditional Christian theology, we will not be successful in formulating a truly liberating Christian theology in India. The liberation that Dalits in India seek is a comprehensive liberation. Hence, I submit that committed Christian Dalits, with others, can help evolve this truly Christian liberation theology provided they are willing to make sacrifices and are able to transcend several of their accidental identities namely, for instance, North-South, Mala-Paraya, Telugu-Tamil, Baptist-Church of South India, activist-academican, man-woman, Christian-non-Christian, Dalit-Non-Dalit, ahteist- religious etc. To repeat, in order to formualte a truly liberating Christian theology in India, we need to have a comprehensive and deeper analytical framework. On the way we will meet foes who pretend to be friends and vice versa. We cannot

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16. Heard him outline in a session at the GURUKUL SUMMER INSTITUTE 1995

expect to have the EASTER experience without going through the way of the cross.

Now by way of contributing to the emerging Christian Dalit Theology that we are striving to arrive at, I want to raise the following issues for deeper reflection and analysis.

1. The Christ that the modern missionary movement and its theology presented needs to be critically looked at. Our foreparents were polishing missionaries' shoes, cooking food for them tending their horses, dogs and their garden and receiving charity - this is how one Dalit convert put it to me. He even said that missionaries were and are even now not at all interested in the Christian Dalits in India. Traditional Western Christian Theology and the operative Indian Christian Theology are familiar bed-fellows, i.e., allies. They are allies, as one of my friends put it, because there is a Freudian-libidinal relationship between them. Western class superiority and the Indian caste superiority went hand-in-hand is a historical fact and it is also an existential reality. Hence any truly Christian Dalit aspiration for liberation in India must start with a critique of both traditional Western Christian Theology as well as Indian Christian Theology. These two go together in theory and practice at all times and in all places. It is these which together oppress all of us. Western Christian as well as Indian Christian paternalism is also one of the reasons for our "wounded psyche".

2. Missionaries preferred in the past and continue to prefer in the present first the so-called caste converts. As a general rule, it was the latter who mattered and still matter to the former. When such so-called caste converts' generation receded to the background or passed away, it was a few Christian Dalit families or leadership who become the allies of missionaries, who stood to gain in every way and who sustained the interests of missionaries and who benefited themselves at the expense of other Christian Dalits. It is some such Dalit converts who through marriage alliances with each other continue to cause havoc in the life of the Church in the CSI elsewhere.

3. Some of the funding agencies also see that the Christians in India remained separated. How many will talk about "Christian Dalit Theology" once the flow of money stops seems to be a precious question. A careful distinction needs to be made about the funding agencies. This is to say that not all funding agencies are our friends. Who stand with the Dalits and who do not will help unravel several mysteries. In the same vein, I must add that I have a salutory appreciation for the lead that the Gurukul leadership provides to the cause of Dalits. Among others, I believe it promotes research in Dalit Studies. I think the funding agencies which stress the "Christian" identity need to be critically viewed.

4. Divisions among Dalit Christians are perpetuated. What is the network that does that? Sometimes Christian Dalits themselves divide and marginalise other Christian Dalits. Can one Christian Dalit group from one region or a confessional family or a language group put down other Christian Dalits?

5. The Christian side of the Indian Dalit Church has proved to be vindictive even to Dalits, let alone the caste converts. Those who claim to be Dalit champions in the Church and seminaries should know what their interests are and where their interests lie. Oppurtunism and vested interests have paralysed us in the past is something that one would hesitate to dispute.

6. How will the emerging Christian Dalit Theology help Dalits all over the country? Unless such a theology leads to a transforming action, what use is it to Dalits and others? Or, is it the attempt of a small elite trying to determine things? As Monica Melanchthon has rightly pointed our elsewhere that "the only way to construct a relevant Christology is to relate it to the theology of the Church".[17] In other words, what she says is what EATWOT has been saying all along! Let us then, begin our homework with the theology of the Church.

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17. Monica Melanchthon, "A FRESH LOOK AT JESUS CHRIST', a paper presented to the twenty-third Quadrennial Assembly of the NCCI, Nagpur, March 03, 1996, p. 11.

7. The Indian Church, by and large, is a Dalit Church. No doubt. It means to say, as some claim, that about 85 percent of the membership of the Indian Church is Dalit. True. But, that leaves about 15 percent of the Non-Dalit Christian constituency. In this context, the issue of violence, as some have pointed out, becomes important in the emerging Christian Dalit Theology. Do we as Christians have any responsibility for the rest of the 15 percent?, for the rest of the Dalit, Tribal and others amongst us? Dalit theologians are yet to speak about the gospel of Forgiveness. How to reconcile perpetration of violence done to the Dalits and preaching of the Gospel of Forgiveness to the perpetrators of that violence? Can we as Christian Dalits do theology for the Non-Dalits as well as Non-Christian Dalits?. Thus, the Gospel of Forgiveness, peace, reconciliation and a redeemed humanity become crucial in the search for a truly liberating Christian theology in India. To preclude this from our view would be a serious error. But this does not mean that one should preach easy peace and reconciliation. How far does the Dalit community in general would accept the "Christian" contribution as its own in its struggles? Let us reflect.

8. Any historical work, let me say this with my limited knowledge, related to Dalits done so far and to be done in the future especially in the field of Dalit conversions will remain incomplete, undependable and coloured or partial because the sources were made to remain coloured because those who made the sources with a few exceptions were also coloured.

While search, re-search, interpretation and re-interpretation can go on in different directions, the emerging Christian Dalit Theology could keep Sociology as the starting point for the time being. Tamil classical literature needs to be further investigated; so also Dalit culture-related research and studies.

9. Fear for systematizing Christian Dalit Theology seems to be there in certain quarters. What we need in India is a carefully evolved analytical framework which will go beyond EATWOT's

analysis which means, to critique caste factor and include gender, environmental and other issues. Perhaps EATWOT needs some of us there or we could invite EATWOT for a dialogue with us. Granting that Dalit search for humanity is distinctively unique and very relevant in the Indian context can one add, joining company with D.S. Jeevan Babu, that ecumenical orientation rather than ethnic, race, caste or any other orientation is important?[18]

10. In certain quarters, through marriage alliances, the Dalits and Non-Dalits have come together. In such a context, how could the Christian Dalit Theological Articulation be seems to be a precious question.

11. In an outstanding Dalit systematic theologian such as Nirmal, one identifies different levels of understanding with regard to theological methodology to be adopted in doing Dalit theology. At one level, he called for an exclusive methodology in doing Christian Dalit Theology. 'Pathos' seemed to have been the criterion to arrive at such a position. This is to say that only Dalits can do authentic Dalit Theology based on their particular experience which is unique. It is both inclusive and exclusive. Others have no place in such an enterprise and undertaking. Thereafter, he had added two other types of groups namely, sympahtisers and empathisers. While he had said that Non-Dalits who have no first hand experience of Dalit pathos (sympathisers), can also do theology, he maintained, however, that oppressed people like Shudras can belong to the second group namely, empathisers.

But Nirmal did not practice what he had said about the Shudras. May be he had second thoughts about this proposition, because Shudras also can be anti-Dalit when it comes to sharing power with them.

Dalits and Shudras are still an exclusive category. Several people ask; can a Christian theology be exclusive? Does Christ

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18. Cf. Rev. D.S. Jeevan Babu's writings in the NCCR, Vol. CXVI, No. 2, February 1996

the Gospel belong to one group only? Can women say that they alone are entitled to do feminist/womanist theology? Can the Blacks in the U.S.A. say that they alone will do Black Theology? In the same way, can Dalits also say that Dalit Theology is their own business and others have nothing to do with it? Is it possible to talk of Shudra, Dalit, Brahmin etc., theologies, all with the adjective Christian? Again, one finds another level in Nirmal. He had said that Dalit Theology can be plural, that is, different people making different Dalit Theologies depending on their particular context and particular experience[19]. If theology is faith-articulation, then can one group claim to do theology for the other?

James Massey has pointed out that except the first group in the Varna system, namely Brahmins, that all the other three groups belong together and the implication is that they can do theology together.[20] The learned Bishop, Nirmal Minz, had made a distinction between 'Adi' people namely Dalits and Tribals and 'Jati' people or caste people. The implication is that 'Adi' people, that is Dalits and Tribals alone can do Dalit Theology or have a common ideology.[21]

Having cited the different positions of three different Dalit and Tribal theologians, now I want to raise the issue: what about those who are not Dalits, yet who are committed to the cause of Dalit liberation? For instance, CASTE AND ALTERNATIVE CULTURE by Katti Padma Rao, a Dalit, was rendered in English by D. Anjaneyulu, a Brahmin.[22] what about those friends outside India who are genuinely committed to support the cause of Dalits in India? Should they be also excluded? What about the Blacks who originally inspired the Dalit Movement in Maharastra? Do Christian Dalits in India have anything to learn from other 'invisible' people, the Minjung, the Burakumin etc?

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19. Cf: Write-up on A.P. Nirmal in CONTEMPORARY ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY;see also: SAPLINGS, UTC MAGAZINE 1996.
20. James Massey, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: DALITS.
21. Nirmal Minz, Ibid.
22. A Gurukul Publication

Dalit struggle is a prolongued one and an exhausting one at that and therefore, we need several resources from several fields: politics, economics, sociology, religion, history, anthropology, psychology, literature, ethnography etc. Since our struggle is a prolongued one and the task enormous, in responding to a presentation by Nirmal way back in 1992 in the UTC at the Scholars' Forum, I called for international research and co-operation to promote Dalit Studies. It means to say that we need others, other co-sojourners and co-piligrims on the way. Or, is this position totally wrong?

12. How do we perceive Dalit oppression? How is it different from Christian Dalit oppression? What is it that the Dalits hope for? What is it that they want to be liberated from? Is it a human rights issue and therefore, a justice related issue as claimed by K. Wilson and some others or is it much more? Is the Christian Dalit aspiration for liberation same as that of Dalits and other oppressed groups in general or different.[23]

13. A related issue is mobilizing support from all forces which stand for humanization of Dalits, forces which stand for justice, preservation of life, human rights, peace and humanity in India and around the globe. Is there a need to belong to such a network? I think, yes.

14. Elsewhere V. Devasahayam has pointed out that capitalism and caste system are the two sides of the same coin[24] EATWOT has thus far preoccupied itself with opposing capitalism, the one side of the coin. On the other hand, Dalit theologicians have so far and more or less primarily concerned themselves with annihilating the caste system the other side of the coin. We are living in an era in which globalization of the market has taken place. In such a context, the international monetary forces are aligned together and seek homogeneity in the marketization process which affects

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23. K. Wilson in TOWARDS A DALIT THEOLOGY edited by M.E. Prabhakar.

24. V. Devasahayam, OUTSIDE THE CAMP p 52.

all walks of life. Has this not affected the Dalits? Is it possible then, in such a situation, to talk only about eradicating caste system, without making reference to the global system as well as the national structures which promote the former? This again takes us back to evolving a broader analytical framework which will critique both capitalism as well as the caste system.

15. How, why and when did our Aramaen Father start to be a wanderer? What has been responsible for his wandering? Deprivation of land, the basis of all source of life, and the denial of right to life and identity seem to be the clue to the emerging truly Indian Christian Dalit Theology. The Book of Deuteronomy presents three things, among others: a wandering Aramaen, right to life on the basis of land and identity and the choice of death and life. These I think, may help in formulating the truly Christian Dalit theological hermeneutics.

The issues I have raised above may be considered in their totality rather than in isolation. I attempted to think aloud with you. Thanks to Gurukul for the opportunity.

FOR THE GURUKUL SUMMER INSTITUTE 1996

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About the Book:

Dalits and Christian Mission in the Tamil Country deals with the Dalit Movement in general and Dalit Christians in particular. It attempts to grapple with the Dalit quest for humanity and the Christian response to such a Quest.

ASIAN TRADING CORPORATION
150, Brigade Road, Bangalore-560 025

ISBN 81-7086-200-0